Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/loveofsacredhear0000vari

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART

A SERIES FOR SPECIAL SPIRITUAL READING

I.

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART.

Illustrated by St. MARGARET MARY and the Blessed JOHN EUDES.

"A book of much value to Religious and others, and it is certainly calculated to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."—*Messenger of the Sacred Heart.*

"A valuable guide and stimulus to perfection through charity."—*Month.*

II.

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART.

Illustrated by St. GERTRUDE.

"An admirable work."—*Irish Independent.*

"A welcome addition to the Catholic private devotional library."—*Catholic Women's League Magazine.*

III.

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART.

Illustrated by St. MECHTILDE.

The Love of the Sacred Heart

Illustrated by
ST. MECHTILDE

With a Foreword by the
LORD BISHOP OF SALFORD

ALMA COLLEGE
244.53
LIBRARY
M465
Alma, California

LONDON
Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd.
28 ORCHARD STREET 8-10 PATERNOSTER ROW
W. 1 E.C. 4
AND . AT . MANCHESTER . BIRMINGHAM . AND . GLASGOW
1922

46489

NIHIL OBSTAT:

G. H. JOYCE, S.J.

Censor Deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:

EDM. CAN. SURMONT,

Vicarius Generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,

Die 6 *Aprilis*, 1922.

FOREWORD

ALL lovers of the Sacred Heart were delighted to see in the year of grace 1920 the long wished for canonization of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690), whom God raised up in recent centuries to revive the fire of devotion to the divine Heart of our Lord, which had well-nigh been extinguished by the frost and drought of the Jansenist heresy. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is too often spoken of and thought of as a "modern" devotion, and in one sense it is such. The life-work of St. Margaret Mary has not only given that sweetest of devotions a much greater vogue and a deeper intensity throughout the world, but it has even in our own times led to still further and wider developments, such as the beautiful and providential practice, whose world-wide spread we owe to the blessing and encouragement of Pope Pius X—I mean the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the home, which, thank God, is becoming yearly more popular in our own country. But the present book will show that in another sense the devotion is by no means "modern." As will be seen, the first part consists of copious translations from the marvellous mystical revelations of a lover of the Sacred Heart of a much earlier century, the Benedictine nun St. Mechtilde (1241–1298), whose enraptured utterances surpass in some respects those of her better known friend

and disciple the great St. Gertrude, and whose significance as the type of mystic theology has been immortalized by Dante in his mighty epic.* It will not fail to be observed how extraordinarily similar a great deal of the inspired language and profound imagery of the Saint of the thirteenth century is to that of the one who was canonized last year; although I am not aware that there is evidence of Margaret Mary having been a student of the works of her illustrious predecessor. It is surely both significant and instructive that our divine Lord deigned to make known the mysteries and treasures of the unfathomable abyss of His divine Love in a manner so similar, often identical, to two of His chosen spouses, at an interval of several centuries. The pious translator of the following treatises, however, very truly remarks that in the revelations of the earlier of these Saints, the mystic doctrines of the Sacred Heart are presented more especially for the guidance and edification of the chosen few, especially of the inmates of the cloister, called to the more hidden life. On the other hand, the cult of the Sacred Heart in these last three centuries has become, and is becoming daily more and more, the common property of all the children of the Church, of the laity as well as of the clergy and the religious, of the working man and woman as well as of the theologian, and even of the little children as well as of Christians of mature years. And that recent form of it to which I have alluded above —the Enthronement in the home, whether the palace or the cottage—has further widened it to become the

* The Matelda of *Purgatorio*, xxxiii. 118.

property and the privilege not merely of the individual soul, but of the whole Christian family.

May every reader of these pages pray for her who in the midst of grave sickness and pain during her last illness compiled them out of her abounding love to the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord.

✠ LOUIS CHARLES,
Bishop of Salford.

Octave of the Epiphany,
1922.

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD - - - - - v

INTRODUCTORY: THE REVELATIONS TO ST. MECHTILDE

CHAPTER

I. THE BOOK OF SPECIAL GRACE - - 1

II. LIFE OF ST. MECHTILDE - - - 5

III. ST. MECHTILDE'S MISSION - - - 9

THE SACRED HEART WHILE ON EARTH

I. LOVE: THE REASON OF THE INCARNATION - 12

II. LOVE ALWAYS LEADS TO JESUS - - 15

III. THE FOUR BEATINGS OF THE SACRED HEART - 16

IV. THE SOLICITUDE OF THE SACRED HEART FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS - - - 17

V. GOOD WORDS: WITNESSES OF THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART - - - - 19

VI. THE TEARS OF OUR LORD - - - 21

VII. THE HEART OF JESUS AND THE WELL-BELOVED APOSTLE - - - - - 24

CHAPTER PAGE

VIII. THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE HEART OF JESUS AND OUR HEARTS - - - - 26

IX. HOW OUR LORD PIERCED MAGDALEN'S HEART DURING THE PASSION - - - 28

X. THE SACRED HEART AT THE TIME OF OUR LORD'S DEATH - - - - 32

XI. THE GLORIFICATION OF THE SACRED HEART - 34

XII. PRAISE AND SUPPLICATION: THE FIVE JOYS OF THE HEART OF JESUS IN HIS RESURRECTION - - - - - 38

XIII. LOVE BROUGHT BACK THE SON OF GOD TO HEAVEN - - - - - 40

THE DEALINGS OF THE SACRED HEART WITH MEN

XIV. THE SACRED HEART MEDIATES BETWEEN GOD AND MAN - - - - - 42

XV. IN WHAT MANNER THE SACRED HEART EXERCISES THE OFFICE OF MEDIATOR TOWARDS US - - - - - - 45

XVI. THE SACRED HEART IS THE SOURCE OF THE DIVINE LIFE WHICH WE RECEIVE IN BAPTISM 49

XVII. THE MEANS OF LEADING A CHRISTIAN LIFE MUST BE SOUGHT IN THE SACRED HEART - 53

XVIII. MARY'S ASSISTANCE WITH THE SACRED HEART 55

CHAPTER PAGE

XIX. THE CHURCH ENSHRINED IN THE SACRED HEART - - - - - 59

XX. THE SACRED HEART AND SINNERS - - 61

XXI. THE SACRED HEART A PERPETUAL VICTIM 62

XXII. IN HEAVEN THE SACRED HEART IS STILL THE HEART OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - - 63

XXIII. THE INVITATIONS GIVEN BY THE SACRED HEART TO THOSE WHO WISH TO DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO ITS SERVICE - - - 66

XXIV. WHAT THE SACRED HEART WISHES TO BE FOR US - - - - - 68

XXV. THE SACRED HEART IS THE SOURCE OF FERVOUR 70

XXVI. THE SACRED HEART AND ITS UNION WITH SOULS 72

XXVII. CONSECRATED SOULS: THEIR VOCATION - 76

XXVIII. THE TIME OF TRIAL - - - 78

XXIX. TEPIDITY - - - - - 80

XXX. THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE - - - 83

XXXI. THE RENEWAL OF OUR FIRST FERVOUR - 86

XXXII. THE SACRED HEART SHOULD BE THE ONLY TREASURE OF A RELIGIOUS - - 90

XXXIII. A RELIGIOUS BELOVED BY THE SACRED HEART IS A TREASURE IN A COMMUNITY - - 93

XXXIV. THE SACRED HEART AND THE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL - - - - 95

CHAPTER PAGE

XXXV. THE SACRED HEART AND THOSE WHO SUFFER 96

XXXVI. THE SACRED HEART WISHES TO CONSOLE THOSE WHO SUFFER - - - - 98

XXXVII. THE SACRED HEART AT ST. MECHTILDE'S DEATH 100

XXXVIII. THE SACRED HEART AND PURGATORY - 107

XXXIX. THE SACRED HEART AND HEAVEN - - 113

XL. OUR DUTY TOWARDS THE SACRED HEART: DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART - 115

XLI. THE ADORATION OF THE SACRED HEART - 117

XLII. THE OFFERING OF OUR HEARTS - - 119

XLIII. THE OUTPOURINGS OF THE HEART - - 122

XLIV. REPARATION FOR SIN - - - 125

XLV. THANKSGIVING - - - - 129

XLVI. CONFIDENCE - - - - 131

XLVII. ORDINARY ACTIONS DONE IN UNION WITH THE SACRED HEART - - - - 134

XLVIII. DIVINE PRAISE - - - - 138

XLIX. THE SACRED HEART ITSELF TRAINS MECHTILDE IN DIVINE PRAISE - - - 141

L. THE INTENTIONS OF THE HEART OF JESUS IN DIVINE PRAISE - - - - 144

LI. THE SACRED HEART AND CONFESSION - 146

LII. ON PURITY OF CONSCIENCE - - 151

LIII. THE SACRED HEART AND HOLY MASS - 154

CHAPTER PAGE

LIV. INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION - 159

LV. PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION - 161

LVI. THE FIVE HAIL MARYS BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION - - - - 164

LVII. OF DRYNESS IN RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION - - - - 165

LVIII. THE FRUIT OF HOLY COMMUNION - - 167

The Love of the Sacred Heart

The Archives of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

INTRODUCTORY

THE REVELATIONS TO ST. MECHTILDE

CHAPTER I

"*THE BOOK OF SPECIAL GRACE*"

THE Revelations of St. Mechtilde are contained in a book entitled *The Book of Special Grace*. This book was written almost entirely without her knowledge, and is based on the recitation of her communications with our divine Master. Two of the Saint's companions, of whom St. Gertrude was one, had arranged together to write it. It was nearly finished when St. Mechtilde became aware of it. While she was hearing Mass a mysterious voice made one of the culprits known to her and at the same time asked her this question: "What shall be her reward for what she has written?" Very much astonished St. Mechtilde asked her friend if she had been in the habit of writing down what she told her. She, not wanting to acknowledge it, made some excuse, telling the Saint to ask our Lord about it. St. Mechtilde, having thus been made aware of the truth, was so grieved as to be inconsolable. She therefore went to

our Lord, her ordinary refuge, and told Him confidingly of her sorrow. Our Lord appeared to her at once, holding the book on His Heart with His right hand. He kissed it, and said to her: "All that is found written in this book has flowed from My divine Heart, and will return to it."

St. Mechtilde asked our Lord if now she should cease communicating to others the graces she received from God. Our Lord answered: "Give Me to others with the liberality of My generous Heart. Give Me to others according to My goodness and not according to thine." She answered: "What will they do with this book after my death and what good will result from its being written?" The Lord replied: "All those that seek Me therein with a true heart shall rejoice; those that love Me will be more inflamed with My love; and those in sorrow shall be consoled." Mechtilde again asked what name the book should bear, and our Lord answered: "They shall call it *The Book of Special Grace*."

So our Lord Himself approved of the book being written and also watched over it, so that no error should appear in it.

One day Mechtilde, remembering this book, asked our Lord this question: "How am I to know whether what they have written is correct, as I have neither seen nor approved of it; and even if I read it carefully now, I could not be sure if I remembered correctly?" Our Lord replied: "I am in the hearts of those who hear thee and I execute their desires. I am their understanding as they listen, and it is through Me they are able to comprehend what thou sayest. I am also in their mouth, when they speak of it. I guide their hands, when they write it. I am their Helper and co-operator in all, and so, in Me and by Me, who am the Truth, all that they dictate and write is true. The elegance of style with which I speak to thee is wanting, but by My grace, all is approved and confirmed in the truth. Thou hast so

often besought Me never to allow thee to fall into any error, that thou hast good reason to believe that, in My goodness, I have heard thy prayer." She then saw three rays of light from the divine Heart fall on the two persons who wrote this book, and understood from this that it was by the inspiration and strength of divine grace that they devoted themselves to this work, and that therefore they generously accepted all the fatigue that came to them from it.

The book could therefore be finished and would do great good to souls. Mechtilde's two friends congratulated themselves and thanked our Lord. . . . "Blessed be God, the Author of all good; it is by His Will and blessing that this book is published. It is by no private design nor presumption in those who have written, but by the advice and command of their Abbess and with the approval of their Bishop.

"May we be forgiven the mistakes in composition and in elegance of style which will be met with; we are not accustomed to writing, and St. Augustine says: 'A characteristic of a good mind is to love the truth in the words, not the words themselves.'" (*Prologue.*)

The servant of God was moreover able to obtain the book, correct it and give it her sanction. It was not, however, without great resistance on the part of her two companions, who constantly refused to allow her to see it from fear of causing her pain. Our Lord had once more to interfere, and He reassured St. Mechtilde, saying to her: "Fear not, all comes from Me, all is My work. I gave thee the gift, and as it comes from Me, it is also just as truly by My inspiration that thy companions have undertaken and carried on this work. So, fear not and be not alarmed, I will Myself preserve this book from all error. Every word that has been written has been dictated by the Holy Spirit, and all are as pearls that shall adorn their crown in My eyes eternally."

From this time the two friends, reassured by this

vision, showed the book to St. Mechtilde whenever she wished it, or they read it to her faithfully. In doubtful passages the Saint consulted our Lord, and so He corrected it Himself.

After St. Mechtilde's death St. Gertrude saw her in glory, and asked if she were pleased or otherwise with the publication of this book. "It is my greatest joy," she replied. "I see it will contribute to the glory of God, to the fulfilment of His will, and to my neighbours' good. The book shall also be named *The Light of the Church*. They who read it shall recognize themselves in the brightness of the light. They will see by what spirit they are animated. The sorrowful shall find in it consolation." The Saint compared the readers of this book to those who should receive a present from a King through a messenger. They would possess and reap as much benefit as if they had received the gift direct from the King's hand (vii. 17).

Such was the origin of the *Book of Special Grace*. It would be impossible to tell the history of its beginning more simply or to establish better its truth and worth. Its composition extended over several years. It was begun in 1291, when Mechtilde was fifty years of age. It could only have been finished shortly before her death, which took place in 1298. St. Gertrude, who was one of the collaborators, had begun her own book, *The Herald of Divine Love*, the 25th of March, 1289, so that these two admirable works date from the same time.

They are both incomparable treasures of doctrine on the Sacred Heart, for rarely before and never since have the relations of the divine Heart with the other divine Persons or with the souls of men been treated of so fully or with so much exactness and brilliancy.

From this treasure we are going to drink deeply. But first let us cast a glance at the holy soul who thus reveals to us the secrets of the divine Heart. Our faith in her words will surely be the firmer.

CHAPTER II

LIFE OF ST. MECHTILDE

THE first and final chapter of the *Book of Grace* had been carefully hidden from St. Mechtilde's sight. Her humility would certainly have taken alarm at the praises there bestowed on her. These pages, though too few, are enough to make us appreciate her great virtues. We will here give the principal details.

The first chapter begins as follows:

This virgin was from her earliest infancy prevented by divine grace. At her birth, as it was feared that she was about to expire, they carried her in haste to be baptized by a priest of great holiness who was just preparing to celebrate the Holy Mass. After baptizing her he pronounced these words which we love to think prophetic: "Why do you fear? This child will not die, but will become a holy religious. By her God will work great wonders and she will finish her life at a good old age, full of merits." When she was seven years of age her mother took her to visit the convent which was near her parents' residence. Once there she refused to leave, notwithstanding her mother's desire for her to return home. Full of delight, she begged the Sisters, one by one, to receive her into their company; and neither threats nor coaxing could move her to leave them.

What do we know of the family that the Saint deserted at so early an age, and what of the monastery in which she had come to bury her young life?

Mechtilde belonged to the family of Hackborn. She was born in 1241. The monastery into which she entered in 1248 was at that time at Rodarsdorf in the vicinity of her parents' chateau. In 1258 this monastery

was transferred to Helfta, on land which was given by her brothers the Lords Albert and Ludwig of Hackborn. This monastery was near the small town of Eisleben in Saxony, where, two centuries later, Luther was born.

St. Mechtilde advanced rapidly from virtue to virtue. "She had a wonderfully sweet disposition, profoundly humble, most patient, a sincere lover of poverty, and very fervent and devoted. But it was especially in her love for God and her neighbour that she made the greatest progress; she showed herself pleased and amiable to all, full of tender compassion towards the afflicted or those in trouble. She was like a loving mother to those, showering on them consolation and help, and so no one went near her without being comforted and strengthened. She was much loved by all. Everyone wanted to be with her, and this often caused her some inconvenience."

So perfect a religious must have been a treasure in the Convent of Helfta. Not only had God enriched her with spiritual gifts, but also with those of nature—learning, a wide knowledge of literature, a beautiful voice, everything that could make her useful to the monastery. It seemed as if God would not allow her to want for anything.

Her beautiful voice caused her to be appointed Cantor to the Convent. Many times she gained by her singing what she prized more than the applause of men, the approval of her divine Spouse, to whom she had entirely consecrated her voice. She also had charge of the School, where St. Gertrude soon became one of her pupils. "She taught Christian doctrine with such efficiency that we have never had, and fear we never shall have, anyone in our Monastery to equal her. The Sisters gathered around her as around a preacher to hear the word of God. She dictated and taught them prayers, and they were so numerous that if gathered together they would make a larger book than all the psalms.

"Besides all this she was a perfect religious ready to

renounce her own will and full of self-contempt, prompt in obedience, zealous for prayer and contemplation; she also had the gift of tears. She so practised poverty as to refuse herself even what was necessary. It was only through obedience that she possessed a mantle, and her other garments were made of the commonest materials and mended and patched all over. Being immersed in the love of our divine Lord she so forgot herself that she lost the use of her exterior senses, as we read of St. Bernard. She ate rotten eggs without perceiving it and before those near her could prevent it. Sometimes, when visitors were at the Monastery and she had refused to eat meat, they gave it to her and she ate it, until from their laughter she saw something unusual had occurred and came to herself

" This great lover of suffering mortified her body for the conversion of sinners. During Lent, hearing the people shouting and singing, she felt consumed with zeal for God's honour and also touched with great compassion. To offer God some small reparation she placed pieces of broken glass and other sharp objects in her bed and rolled on them until her flesh was torn and she was covered with wounds and blood; the pain afterwards prevented her from either sitting or lying down. During Passiontide she was so full of compassion she could not speak of the sufferings of Christ without shedding tears. When she spoke either of the sufferings or of the love of Christ she was filled with such fervour that her face and hands became quite red. And we think that she very often shed her blood spiritually for the love of Christ " (v. 30).

In enumerating her virtues Mechtilde's companions often compared her with the different orders of Saints and Angels. They said: " This angelic virgin deserves to be compared above all with the Seraphim; united so frequently, in an intimate manner, with that love which is God Himself; and clasped with so much affection to His Heart, so full of fire, she became one spirit with Him."

She was never tired of speaking of God, and with so much fervour and divine Love that she enkindled the same in the hearts of all who heard her. Indeed, one might say of her, as of the Prophet Elias, that her words "burnt like a torch."

When did Mechtilde receive the first confidences of the Sacred Heart? We are told by her companions that, from her earliest infancy, God commenced to reveal His secrets to her, but she says that one of the first graces she received was the gift of the Sacred Heart. So we may conclude, that for many years, if not all her life, she had had a true devotion to this worthy object of our love. Our Blessed Lord not only revealed to her His Sacred Heart, but He would place it as a pledge in the breast of His holy Spouse. She describes the event in these words: "On Wednesday in Easter Week hearing at Mass the words *Venite benedicti Patris mei*, she was filled with a sweet and extraordinary joy and said to our Lord: 'Oh that I may be one of those blessed souls who shall hear those sweet words from Thy mouth.' Our Lord replied: 'Thou mayest be very sure thou wilt be, and to prove it, I give thee My Heart to keep always, and only to be given back to Me when I shall have fulfilled thy desire. I give thee My Heart as a place of refuge; at the hour of thy death it will be impossible for thee to lose thyself on any other road, thou wilt only have My Heart wherein to rest eternally.'"

This gift was the forerunner of many she was to receive from God. She began to have a very great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ; whenever our Lord appeared to her she nearly always received some special favour from His Heart, as may be seen from many places in this book. She often loved to say: "If all the graces that have come to me from the Sacred Heart of Jesus were written down, a book larger than a Breviary would not suffice in which to narrate them."

CHAPTER III

ST. MECHTILDE'S MISSION

AS far back as the thirteenth century the Sacred Heart enriched this chosen soul with His most extraordinary favours. Like the well-beloved Apostle, Mechtilde often leaned her head on the breast of the Man-God. She drank from the same source as that from which the Apostle had drawn the floods of truth contained in his Gospel. She had free entrance into this sanctuary of perfect praise. She found in this shrine the treasures of all graces and also that of divine love, and her heart was filled with the fire which inflamed the Seraphim. Also she received the Sacred Heart itself in some mysterious way, and bore it in her breast until her death.

In the wonderful favours granted by God to this humble daughter of St. Benedict He had special designs. No doubt He wished to manifest His marvellous condescension. He loves to lower Himself towards souls who sink into their own nothingness, but He wished also to give Mechtilde special tokens of His liberality, so that she might be received as the accredited messenger of His Sacred Heart. The writing of the *Book of Special Grace* was not the result of a little pious indiscretion, but a providential fact, instigated by our Lord Himself. Several times He intervened to calm the fears of the humble Benedictine, to guide the pen of her companions, or to give to the entire book His formal approbation, affirming that all contained therein had originated in His divine Heart. He also declared that that Heart would bless those who on reading this book became enamoured of the gift of special grace.

We must, however, make one remark. Mechtilde did

not receive any mission to convert souls, but only to enlighten those to whom the Sacred Heart had made itself known. As the prophets of the ancient law were only sent to the people of Israel, so the Virgin of Helfta was only sent to the privileged friends of the Sacred Heart. The devotion to this adorable Heart was for three centuries to be the reward of the perfect. Even the title of the book and the kind of grace of which it records the marvels indicate this restriction. It is the *Book of Special Grace*. That of universal grace was only to appear in the seventeenth century, and was also inspired by the Sacred Heart and written by the timid hand of Margaret Mary.

All are now called to know the Sacred Heart. The *Book of Special Grace* must henceforth be known by the second name given it by St. Mechtilde, *The Light of the Church: Liber namque ille Lumen Ecclesiæ vocabitur*—a prophecy which is fulfilled in our days. Thanks to the labours of the Benedictine Fathers of Solesmes, there is now a new translation of St. Mechtilde's works, which gives pious readers the opportunity of tasting the sweetness and unction contained in them. Their doctrinal value is admirably described by the translator as follows: "The mystery of the Incarnation holds the first place, or rather is seen and felt, in all its manifestations. The Man-God is not only Saviour but Mediator between God and man. And what strong incentive caused His intervention and led Him to carry out this rôle even to the end? It was love. Yes, love which is charity, and charity which is God Himself (John iv. 8). Love in human form* seized upon the Son of God and caused Him to descend into the womb of a virgin-daughter of Adam; then, leading Him through the rough ways of poverty and suffering to the Cross on Calvary, raised Him up again, and followed Him to heaven, to the right

* See p. 14, Book II., Chap. i.

hand of His Father, whence she always inclines the Godhead towards the children of earth. . . . The divine Heart is always seen to be a source of love and also of the operations of love. Mechtilde presents us with more pictures than Gertrude, and this applies to all her visions, which are nearly always represented to us under a more sensible form than those of St. Gertrude. What is more delightful or lovingly divine than the gift our Lord made of His Heart to Mechtilde, as a pledge which He would require of her at the moment of death, and this promise made to all: "I will drink of all the hearts who drink of Mine" (*Preface*)?

The works of St. Mechtilde raise the veil which here below hides the Sacred Heart from our longing gaze. We might also state, though that is out of our province, that their literary beauty is of a very high order. Dante was several times inspired by the *Book of Special Grace*, and the question is discussed to-day whether a person introduced into the *Divina Commedia* under the name of Matelda* is not intended to be the Virgin of Helfta. We may leave this question to the decision of the learned, and for ourselves gather together all the passages wherein the Sacred Heart speaks to us in the *Book of Special Grace*.

The Rev. Dom Paquelin marks the different divisions to which we can devote our attention:

1. The dispositions of the Heart of Jesus from the moment when in the bosom of the Father He was seized by love and cast into the womb of Mary to the day when He returned triumphant to heaven.

2. The relations of the Sacred Heart with each one of us in the mysteries of grace and of the Holy Eucharist.

3. Our acts of worship towards the Sacred Heart.

A summary of these extracts would form a very complete code of doctrine of the Sacred Heart. So that the first pages of this book might be called *A Sixteenth Century Treatise on Devotion to the Sacred Heart*.

* Matelda, *Purgatorio*, xxxiii. 118.

THE SACRED HEART WHILE ON EARTH

CHAPTER I

LOVE—THE REASON OF THE INCARNATION

THE greatest marvel in heaven and on earth is the Incarnation of the Son of God. That by a word the Almighty should bring out of nothing light and the stars, the earth and the heavens, is nothing very astonishing ; it is the work of one absolute Creator and Master. But that the Almighty should deign to abase Himself, be conceived and born of a woman, and appear like an ordinary child, is what neither Angels nor men could have imagined ! And what led the Son of God to such depths of humiliation ? His love for us—" God of God, light of light. True God of true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, and made man."

The Incarnation is therefore caused by love—St. Mechtilde states the truth with both strength and grace. She personifies love under the form of a Virgin, and it is this Virgin who steals from the Heart of God His Son eternal and Almighty as Himself.

We will give her own words: " She saw in the Heart of God what seemed a beautiful Virgin, who had in her hand a diamond ring with which she constantly touched the Heart of God. The soul asked the Virgin why she so touched the divine Heart and she replied: " I am divine

Love, and this diamond represents Adam's sin, and as blood is used with which to break the diamond, so Adam's faults can only be obliterated by the Incarnation and blood of Christ. As soon as Adam had sinned, I intervened and prevented the consequences of this fault. I incessantly touched the Heart of God, moving it to pity, and left it no peace until I had taken the Son of God from the bosom of the Father and placed Him in the womb of Mary His Mother " (II. xvii. 1).

What a delightful thought ! The love of God seized Adam's sin, blacker than coal, and made of it a precious diamond ! With this sin so transformed it touched the Heart of God and caused the greatest of wonders, the Incarnation of the Divine Word. Holy Church, which had already declared this thought in the Symbol of the Creed, developed it still further in the Hymn for the feast of the Sacred Heart. Are not the two following stanzas a remembrance of St. Mechtilde's revelations ?

Amor coegit te tuus
Mortale corpus sumere,
Ut novus Adam redderes
Quod vetus ille abstulerat.

Ille amor, almus artifex
Terræ, marisque et siderum,
Errata patrum miserans
Et nostra rumpens vincula.

" It was Thy love which forced Thee to take upon Thee a mortal Body in order to restore to us, O second Adam ! what the first had caused us to lose.

" It was this love, O Sovereign Creator of the earth, the sea and the heavens ! that pitied the fall of our first parents and broke the chains of our slavery."

Love alone overcame the power of divine Majesty. He, so to say, abased His unfathomable Wisdom; He then poured out His Goodness, tempered the rigour of His Justice, changed it into mercy and then lowered the

Greatness of God down to the misery of our exile. The Incarnate Word could therefore say to St. Mechtilde: "I am the Son of Love and Love is My Mother" (i. 35); and the Angels rightly hailed Him, saying: "We praise Thee for ever, whom love has made the Son of a Virgin" (i. 12).

CHAPTER II

LOVE ALWAYS LEADS TO JESUS

LOVE which caused the Son of God to come down on the earth will leave Him no more but will be the moving power of all He does. So, the Virgin who had personified Love, told St. Mechtilde that she had led Mary to go to the hill country to visit St. Elizabeth. In his mother's womb St. John was filled with so great a joy at the presence of Christ that he never thrilled with earthly joy.

And then Love continued: "I first helped His Holy Mother with my pure hands to wrap Him in swaddling clothes. I warmed Him in my embrace: and then and afterwards I rendered to Him and His Mother all the services they needed. Afterwards I led Him to Egypt, and then I inspired Him in all He did or suffered for man until I had fastened Him to the tree of the Cross. There I appeased God's anger entirely and united man to God by the chain of an indissoluble love."

St. Paul says: *Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*— "Christ Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me" as a Victim on the Cross. But as love was always the cause of His gifts we may extend this conclusion and say: Jesus Christ loved me, therefore He gives me His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, His Mother from the Cross, His grace in the Holy Sacraments, His light in the Gospel, the Church for a Mother, the priesthood for a support, and heaven for a reward.

Love still opens the Sacred Heart so that it may pour down on us all its treasures.

CHAPTER III

THE FOUR BEATINGS OF THE SACRED HEART

FROM the first instant of His conception until His death Love reigned as King over the Son of God made man. This Love had its counterpart in the Sacred Heart. One Christmas day Mechtilde was allowed to fathom this secret. Taking the Infant God in her arms she pressed Him to her breast, and felt the beatings of the Sacred Heart. She heard three loud, quick beats, then one lighter. Mechtilde was astonished. The divine Infant said to her: " My heart did not beat like those of other men, but always as you have heard it, from My infancy until My death, and this was why I died so quickly on the Cross. The first beat comes from the Almighty *power* of My love which was so strong in me that by sweetness and patience it conquered the opposition of the world and the cruelty of the Jews. The second beat comes from a love full of *wisdom ;* it led Me to conduct Myself and all that was Mine so admirably, and to regulate all that is in heaven or on earth so wisely. The third comes from a love of *mildness*—I was so entirely penetrated with it, that for Me it changed this world's bitterness into sweetness, and caused Me even to find sweet the hard death I bore for the salvation of men. The last beat, more faint, expresses the kindness I showed as man, which rendered Me agreeable to all, and even imitable."

And so the Sacred Heart enshrines an *almighty*, a most *wise*, and an infinitely *sweet* love of God as well as an *agreeable* and human love.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOLICITUDE OF THE SACRED HEART FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS

THE Prophet said of the future Messias *Exultavit ut gigas*—"He hath rejoiced as a giant." Thinking of these words, Mechtilde asked our Lord to explain them to her. Our Lord at once appeared in the heavens to her like a young man, slender, agile, and very beautiful. He said: "Whoever starts on a long and difficult course must gather his garments closely round him so as not to be retarded. In this way I united Myself closely with human nature and liability to pain, reducing the length of eternity to the shortness of man's life here below. I darted forward as a giant, in all his strength, having this difficult and painful course to run, wherein I should accomplish the redemption of mankind. Again, he who carries something precious and of great value girds himself carefully, for fear he should lose it, so I am carrying the precious treasure, man's soul, and have girded Myself with care, and I carry the souls of all those who are to be saved, with love and untold desires, in My Heart."

He who like a giant sprang from heaven to save souls, transformed by love, became the Good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep. The young man, slender and agile, has to take the part of the Father of the family going to meet the prodigal son and preparing a banquet at his son's return. Who could describe the ardent desires of the Heart of Jesus for the salvation of souls? "Come here and rest at My feet," He said one day to Mechtilde; obeying at once, she rested her head on Jesus' feet, so that her ear was just over the wound in His foot, and there she heard the sound as of water boiling in the wound. Our

Lord asked her what was the sound she heard. Mechtilde thought she could not tell, and our Lord continued: "This boiling caldron seems to say: Hasten! hasten! So the ardent love of My heart ever urged me on, saying: Hasten from labour to labour, from town to town, from preaching to preaching, never allowing Me any rest, until I had done all that was necessary for thy salvation."

CHAPTER V

GOOD WORDS—WITNESSES OF THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART

ALL Christ's works originated in His Heart. From this fruitful and loving Heart, as He Himself says, flows and will flow without ceasing every good, all joy and happiness in heaven and on earth. In the same way all the good words contained in the Gospels come from this sacred source.

He wishes St. Mechtilde to understand this. "He opened to her the wound in His Holy Heart and said to her: 'See the extent of My love. If thou wouldst know it well, seek for nothing clearer than the words of the Holy Gospels. No words have ever expressed a more tender love than those—"As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you" (John xv. 9). And there are many others like them, which I spoke to My disciples as well as to My Father, while loading them with My benefits.'"

Nothing can really express the immensity of the love the Sacred Heart has for us better than these words—"As the Father hath loved Me." We are loved by Jesus as He is loved by His Father. That is, He is loved above all, He is loved so as to be the object of His eternal complacency. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

There are still other words which reveal the greatness of the love of the Sacred Heart—"the four words of the voice of His glory," as He calls them Himself. They are each a triumphal hymn of the Sacred Heart; they are more, they are a proclamation of His love. Let us listen to our Lord:

" This is the voice of My glory. When a soul repents of its sins more through love than through fear, and weeps for the sins it has committed, it deserves to hear these words from Me: ' Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace ' (Luke vii. 48). And, indeed, as soon as anyone repents sincerely of the sins he has committed, I fully forgive him and receive him into My favour as though he had never offended Me.

" The second voice of My glory is that which a soul united to Me by intimate prayer and contemplation hears from Me: ' Come, My beloved, show Me thy face.'

" The third is when a soul about to leave the body is sweetly invited to rest: ' Come, My elect, and I will make of thee My throne ' (*Office of Virgins*).

" The fourth voice of My glory shall be heard on the Day of Judgment, when I will invite with triumph to My Kingdom of honour and glory all those whom I have chosen from all eternity. I shall say to them: ' Come ye blessed of My Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ' " (Matt. xxv. 34).

The words of glory of the Sacred Heart are those which make us happy.

CHAPTER VI

THE TEARS OF OUR LORD

WE are never told in the Gospels that Jesus smiled, but we often hear that He wept. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, an image of a soul dead in sin; and He wept over Jerusalem, the ungrateful and hardened city; and at other times tears fell from the eyes of our divine Master. Why did these tears flow, and what became of them? Let us listen to Jesus:

"On earth, whenever I thought of My ineffable union with the Eternal Father by which I am One with Him, My humanity could not refrain from weeping. Also every time I thought of the immense love which had drawn Me from the Father's bosom to unite Me with human nature, My humanity was fain to weep." Then Mechtilde asked: "And where are those tears which love made Thee shed?" He answered: "They are in a special place in My Heart, they are a loved treasure, guarded in a chosen, secret place." She replied: "Thou didst tell me once that these tears of love disappeared in Thy Heart as in a furnace." Our Lord replied: "That is quite true, for in the furnace of My Heart they disappear as drops of water thrown into the fire, but they are not consumed, they remain in the depth of My Heart."

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is therefore the source of the tears He shed while here below and the mysterious reservoir which received and guards them even now in heaven.

"Jesus, O most loving Jesus," cries out Mgr. Baudry, "how long have I begged of Thy Heart the secret of those tears Thou didst shed on earth! Have I not wept enough to deserve to be told the value of those tears?

" Sweet as the dew from Heaven and bitter as the waters of the ocean, tears are equally a sign of joy or of sadness, and because both these feelings come from the heart, it follows that tears are but the words of the heart, the exterior manifestation of what it feels within " (Mgr. Baudry, 434).

The love of Jesus for His Father, the love of Jesus for men, was then the cause of His tears—tears of joy because of the glory He was about to procure for His Father and the salvation He was bringing to the world by His sacrifice, tears of sadness on account of the insults continually offered to that well-beloved Father and because of the ingratitude of which mankind was guilty.

The tears of Jesus were gathered together and are kept in His Heart. Notwithstanding the burning flames of which that Heart is the seat, they are not consumed. Let us draw near to the precious treasure which contains them. Somewhere there we shall find a tear shed for ourselves, but let us bring our own so that they may be sanctified, even those we shed for frivolous reasons. " Thou shalt say to the person for whom Thou prayest," said our Lord one day to St. Mechtilde, " that she should not weep so much, but if she cannot help doing so that she should unite her tears to Mine, regretting that she had not shed them for sinners or through love. I will then offer them to the Father, united to Mine, when she asks me to do so." Our Lord continued: " Tell her from Me, that she should beg Me in My goodness to change the nature of her tears as if they had been shed from love or devotion, or from contrition for her sins."

At these words St. Mechtilde wondered much that tears shed so uselessly could be changed into such holy tears.

And our Lord said to her: " I ask her only to believe in My goodness, and according to her faith My love in her shall become perfect."

Let us therefore take our tears to the Heart of Jesus. Mingled with His, they will become meritorious. Is it not a consolation for those who weep to be able to do so on the heart of a sincere and sympathizing friend? Where, then, shall we find a friend whose heart is more devoted to us than is the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

CHAPTER VII

THE HEART OF JESUS AND THE WELL-BELOVED APOSTLE

ST. JOHN has called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He had a meek and gentle heart and through his relationship to our Lord was intimate with Him from his infancy. One day Mechtilde was anxious to know if our Lord had renewed His intimacy with his relatives on His return from Egypt. He replied: "How comes it, thinkest thou, that it is said in the Holy Gospels: 'They sought Him amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance,' if I was not sometimes with them? And how came it, thinkest thou again, that St. John the Evangelist was so prompt in following Me, when I called him, after the marriage, if My manner of life and character had not pleased him, for he knew Me well, which made his obedience in following Me so easy."

If Jesus loved St. John more than the other apostles, was it not because St. John loved Him more than did his companions? For this reason he was allowed to rest his head on the breast of his divine Master at the Last Supper. In ecstasy at such a grace Mechtilde asked our Lord how she could show her love and praise Him on His disciple's account. "First, thou shalt praise Me," replied Jesus, "on account of the nobility of his birth, for he belongs to My family, the most noble on the earth; second, that I called him from the marriage to the apostolate; third, that he deserved to see the beauty of My face on the mountain in preference to others; fourth, that at the Last Supper he deserved to rest on My breast; fifth, that he more than others received the gift of knowledge, so that he was able to write for others the prayer

I said on the Mount of Olives; sixth, because by particular love, I, on the Cross, gave him My Mother to guard; seventh, that after My Resurrection I gave him special lights, which caused him to recognize Me when, driven before the storm, he cried out with the other disciples: 'It is the Lord' (John xxi. 7); eighth, that by a special privilege, due to My love, I revealed to Him My mysteries when he wrote the Apocalypse, and through My divine inspiration he was able to write in his Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word,' which truth was unknown to the Prophets and to other men; ninth, that, for My glory, he drank poison; tenth, that in My Name he worked many miracles and raised the dead; eleventh, that I rejoiced him by My many appearances and that I invited him to My banquet with his brothers; twelfth, that I exempted him from all bodily pains and led him gloriously from this exile to eternal joy."

The Sacred Heart not only willed to reward his well-beloved disciple while on earth, but He has also raised him to a high degree of glory in heaven. "St. John received in all his faculties something higher than all the other saints. His eyes see more clearly the inaccessible light of the divinity. His ears catch more quickly, for the nourishment of his soul, the sweet whisper which comes from God. His mouth and tongue taste greater sweetness. But above all his heart burns with a more delicious love of God and springs with freer and more sublime flights into the most inaccessible heights of the divinity."

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE HEART OF JESUS AND OUR HEARTS

ON one Good Friday St. Mechtilde asked herself what worthy thanksgiving she could give to our Lord for His wounds, especially for that in the Sacred Heart. "What kind of thanksgiving ought we to offer Thee, dearest Lord, for being wounded on the Cross for men, when love pierced Thy compassionate Heart with the arrow of an invincible charity? What shall we do when blood and water gushed forth to cure us, and when Thou didst die the death of love vanquished by the love Thou bearest Thy Spouse?"

Our Lord replied: "Let man conform his will to Mine, and in all and above all let My will be everything to him."

And our Lord added: "I tell thee truly I accept tears shed over My Passion, as if they were death suffered for Me."

O Jesus, shall the tears of my eyes be as precious to Thee as the blood of Thy Heart?

"What shall I do, Lord, to obtain these tears?" Our Lord replied: "I will teach thee. Think first of the love and friendliness with which I went forth to meet My enemies. They sought to kill Me with swords and clubs, as though I were a robber and a malefactor, and I went to meet them as a mother goes before her son to save him from the fangs of the wolf. Then, as they struck Me without pity, I returned their blows with as many affectionate kisses to those who should be saved through the merits of My Passion to the last day. Afterwards, while they scourged me so cruelly, I prayed so efficaciously for them to My Heavenly Father that many of them were

converted. When they pressed the crown of thorns on My head, I counted the thorns that pierced Me, so that I might place as many precious stones in their crown. When they nailed Me to the Cross and stretched out My Body so that My bones and sinews could be counted, I employed My divine power to draw to Myself the souls of those that were predestined to eternal life. This was to accomplish what I had already said: 'When I shall be lifted up I shall draw all things to Myself.' When at last the spear opened My side, I drew from My Heart a life-giving drink for all those who had drunk of death in Adam. I caused them to become children of eternal life and salvation in Me who am Life."

How beautiful are these words! The Sacred Heart of Jesus embraces souls when Judas came to give Him a traitorous kiss! The Sacred Heart prays for those who scourge Him. The Sacred Heart exchanges the thorns of His Crown for precious stones for ours! But the last words are especially delightful. We have all drunk of the cup of Adam's heart and we have in our veins an impure, tainted blood, full of pride and the rebellion of concupiscence, passion, sin and death, but from the cup of the Sacred Heart we drink of a precious Blood, full of humility, obedience, sanctity, and eternal life. Let us drink our fill.

CHAPTER IX

HOW OUR LORD PIERCED MAGDALEN'S HEART DURING THE PASSION

FAITHFUL souls followed our Lord when the disciples took flight. Later on, the Sacred Heart was to ask for consolation to repair so many injuries and so much ingratitude, but first it loaded them with great graces. The most highly privileged was St. Mary Magdalen: she was also the most loving.

On the day of St. Mary Magdalen's feast, Mechtilde saw our Lord sweetly folding the humble penitent to His Sacred Heart. Mechtilde was astonished, remembering the words, "and incorruption bringeth near to God" (Wisd. vi. 20) and here was Magdalen! But our Lord reassured Mechtilde: "The intensity of love that she bore Me on earth," He said, "is the measure of the union which associates her with Me in heaven."

And Mechtilde cried: "Oh, dearest Lord, teach me how I may praise Thee as the loving Saint does." Our Lord replied: "You must do it in the five wounds that love imprinted in her soul at the time of My Passion. When I was hanging on the Cross and near the end, seeing My eyes, which had so often looked with mercy on her, about to close in death, Magdalen's heart was pierced as with a sharp arrow. She also saw death about to close My ears which had so often listened to her petitions; she witnessed the sorrow and tears of My Mother whom she tenderly loved for My sake. She then received another wound in her breast which was moved by compassion. She then saw My lips, which had so often said kind words to instruct and console her, above all those words 'Thy faith has made thee safe, go in peace'

(Luke vii. 50), grow white in death and become incapable of speech. She again felt her heart pierced. Shortly afterwards, seeing My Heart and being moved again to great love for Me, her heart was pierced again. And at last, when she saw Me, her life, her joy and all her treasure, without whom she seemed unable to live, dead and laid in the tomb, her soul dying, so to speak, by the violence of its love, succumbed under inexpressible sorrow."

Mechtilde saw Magdalen standing before our Lord. Her burning heart shone with the brightness of the sun and illumined her whole body. Heaven showed her that this fire had been kindled in Magdalen's heart for the first time when she heard Christ say: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace" (Luke vii. 50). It was so strong in her that from that time all her thoughts and actions were changed into it. Mechtilde also understood that in every soul consumed by divine love all its actions, thoughts, or sufferings, like branches thrown into the fire, are changed into the fire of love and increase it constantly by feeding it. If also other combustible matter, such as venial sin, is thrown in it is also consumed and destroyed. This soul would be entirely aflame, and on leaving the body the evil spirits would not dare to approach it. But they who are not burning with this fire, I mean divine love, whatever they may do, will not be able to destroy their sins. The evil they do will weigh them down and be a heavy load at the hour of death.

According to this doctrine, with what a great love must Magdalen's heart have been filled! This holy fire had been enkindled on the day she was forgiven, but it had grown every day while she followed Jesus, listened to His words, and imitated His virtues. What had it become after she had received the five wounds in her heart at the time of the Passion? What was it after our Lord's appearance to her on the morning of the Resurrection?

What was it at the end of Magdalen's life after her long years of penance in the Cave of St. Baume?

She is one of the lovers of the Sacred Heart and her mission is to gain for it disciples from amongst the lost sheep. And Mechtilde teaches us how it is done: "She seemed to see, springing from our Lord's feet, two trees covered with leaves and fruit, signifying the fruits of penance that Magdalen gathered, and distributed with joy to all who sought her help." Mechtilde understood that she had obtained at our Lord's feet the privilege of obtaining for all those who invoked her the gift of true repentance, and St. Mary Magdalen said to her: "Everyone who gives thanks to God for the tears I shed over the feet of Christ, and for my having washed those sacred feet and wiped them with my hair; and who praises Him for the love He then poured into my soul and heart, so inflaming me that I could never again love anything else; and begs tears of true repentance and the infusion of divine love, will see our Lord listen willingly, because of my merits, to his pious requests. Before death his sins will be forgiven and he will increase in the love of God."

Sinful souls who have sullied your hearts like Magdalen, do you not feel great comfort in hearing such words? You, too, can reach the Heart of God. You can also burn with the same love as Magdalen and receive the same wounds!

Prayer to St. Mary Magdalen.

I give Thee thanks, O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, for all the tears that Blessed Mary Magdalen shed at Thy feet, for washing them with her hands, wiping them with her hair, and for the love with which Thou didst so entirely inflame her body and soul, filling her heart so that she never loved any other thing than Thyself. Therefore, I beg of Thee, Lord Jesus, that by her great merits Thou wouldst grant me the tears

of true repentance and fill me with Thy divine love, so that before death all my sins may be forgiven by Thee, Jesus, Saviour of the World, King of glory, who livest and reignest with the same God, Father and Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER X

THE SACRED HEART AT THE TIME OF OUR LORD'S DEATH

LOVE led our Divine Lord in the way of sorrow and kept Him in it until death.

St. Mechtilde asked our Lord how it was that He had expired so quickly, after three beats of His divine Heart. He answered her: "When in a transport of joy the Holy Trinity created My soul, the Three Divine Persons at once surrounded it with Their ineffable love and poured Themselves entirely into it, thus giving to My soul all They possessed—the Father, His almighty power; the Son, His uncreated wisdom; The Holy Spirit, His goodness and love. Then My soul possessed by grace what the Divinity possesses by nature. At that moment the divine and eternal desire which the Holy Trinity had always entertained to unite human nature to the Divinity, in order to redeem man, filled My soul with a great love and urged it to accomplish the task. Also, in the divine wisdom, I understood with a perfectly clear vision the glory of My humanity and the task it had undertaken, in consequence of which I had to devote Myself unsparingly to the salvation of men. To Me the thought was the cause of a divine joy which filled My whole being. The infusion of the merciful love which came from the Holy Spirit into My soul disposed and animated it so effectively towards the salvation of mankind that the burden seemed to it full of sweetness. From the moment of My conception by the Holy Ghost, when My soul was united to My body, this divine desire was controlled by almighty power, and the joy by divine wisdom, and the strength of its love was sweetened by the unction of the Holy

Spirit, and in this way I was able to retain the breath of My temporal life. But when the moment of My death drew near, this all-powerful, wise and merciful love, which at the beginning had caused my heart to beat with so much violence, yielded to the superior strength of the divinity and allowed free course to My desire and joy. My heart was then possessed by a love that may not be compared to any other, for it was greater than all other loves. The separation of My soul from My body, which no other hardships could have caused, was its work."

We learn from this that our Lord's life was only possible because His love was suppressed. His death therefore was caused by His love being allowed complete sway. The Sacred Heart could not contain it. It broke, and on the blood-stained bed of the Cross Jesus, like His Mother, died of love only.

CHAPTER XI

THE GLORIFICATION OF THE SACRED HEART

THE Sacred Heart had been pierced by the lance, the last drops of blood had flowed, the body of the great Victim had been taken down from the Cross, embalmed with sweet spices, enclosed in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, and secured by the seals of the High Priest.

At the dawn of the third day the holy soul of our divine Lord was reunited to the mangled body and brought with it all the privileges of a glorious resurrection, brightness, agility, subtilty, and impassibility. The risen Jesus will sit at the right hand of His Father, but how shall His Sacred Heart be glorified? "The glorification of My Heart consisted in this, that God the Father gave Me all power in heaven and on earth. By this gift I became all-powerful in My humanity as well as in My divinity. I could reward, honour and elevate My friends and prove My love for them with perfect freedom. The glorification of My eyes and ears gave Me the power to penetrate fully into all the needs and sorrows of My faithful ones, and to hear and grant their desires and prayers. My entire body received the power as a privilege of this glory, to be everywhere present in My humanity, as I am in My divinity with all and each of My friends, wherever I wish, a privilege that no other, however powerful, either has obtained, or could obtain."

In this way the glorification of the Sacred Heart is a power at the service of its friends, and it sees all their needs wherever they are. The glorification of the Sacred Heart is again the work of Love.

But what were the special joys of this adorable Heart when it began again to beat in the Holy Sepulchre.

Our Lord deigned to make them known to His humble Spouse in giving her a foretaste of them even here below.

On Easter Sunday evening Jesus appeared to Mechtilde and said to her: "This evening I am come to serve you all. At your meal I would serve five different dishes.

"The first is the joy My divinity received on this day from My humanity and My humanity from my divinity.

"The second, the joy I felt when in the place of all the bitterness that love poured on Me during my Passion, it now spread an immeasurable happiness and the fulness of its joy through all my members.

"The third, the joy I felt in offering to My Father the most precious gift, in a transport of delight. I mean My soul and all the souls I had just redeemed.

"The fourth, the joy I experienced when My Father gave Me the power to honour, enrich and reward the friends whom I had redeemed with so much pain and at so great a cost.

"The fifth, the joy I felt in seeing My Father associate with Me, in the everlasting glory of My throne, those whom I had redeemed, making them coheirs with Me and guests at My table. Other kings, after having dined with their friends, leave them once the repast is over, but My friends will remain with Me eternally.

"To everyone who shall remind Me of these joys, for the first, provided he desires it before death, I will give him a foretaste of My divinity. For the second, I will give him the gift of knowledge. For the third, I will offer his soul to My Father at the hour of his death. For the fourth, I will share with him My labours and the fruit of all My sufferings, and for the fifth, I will associate him in the happiness of the Saints."

It will be instructive to compare this revelation made to St. Mechtilde in the thirteenth century with a page written in the nineteenth by a learned and pious bishop on the mysteries of the Heart of Jesus:

"To-day while giving Himself to God His Father, and to His Church, Jesus takes possession of His Kingdom. He is established king over Sion, His holy mountain (Ps. ii. 6), and His reign is the reign of the light of truth, which He spreads through the world, and by which He subdues it. From His Heart, whence it originated and where it is retained, this divine light spreads, glorifying His body, and, with it, His Church.

"And so, for Jesus Himself, He must reign. He made Himself servant to His Father; He delivered to Him the kingdom He had conquered and the Father established Him King. He had served souls in redeeming them, and He gave Himself to them, and they gave themselves to Him, acknowledging Him as their only Chief. Truth is His kingdom, and truth is His love, which sanctifies the world and becomes for ever its law.

"And such to-day is the part played by the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It grows and spreads in itself, but it also grows in the Church to which it communicates its life, its holiness and its glory.

"Ah, what zeal fills the Sacred Heart of Jesus! What charity consumes it! And yet it is always in peace and accomplishes, with a calm joy, the sublime devotedness of His life. Hitherto, His Heart only saw in God an irritated Judge, now it finds in Him a Father, full of kindness. He saw humanity far from God, covered by its sins, buried in death; now it rises with Him from the tomb. He clothes Himself with our human nature as with a mantle of glory, in order to appear a holy and eternal High Priest, before His Father. His Heart feels the life which abounds. He allows it to overflow and spread abroad; this divine Heart expands; He lives, who was dead; He triumphs, who was vanquished; He superabounds in joy, who was plunged in sadness, weariness and fear. O Jesus, what happy moments! O night, what mysteries! Happy Angels who behold all this, when He renewed the living interchange of graces between

heaven and earth, when the soul, violently separated from the body by death, was happily reunited to it by a secret dispensation, after it had received the much-desired baptism of death. Holy Angels who witnessed all this—I unite myself to your adoration, to your love; I adore and love with you.

" O Heart, how pure and holy thou art at this time! May I dare to fix my gaze on thee?—I, alas, who languish and die in my sins. The Heart of Jesus, always holy, always united to God, always rejoicing in the vision of His face, receives now an increase of beatitude after which He had long sighed. But, independently of what He felt Himself, and of what He enjoyed as the personal reward of His merits, He felt then all the happiness which is experienced by the hearts of the elect when they first come in contact with the divine Essence in the light of glory. He saw, in that instant, what the Saints see and shall see by Him, and He concentrated in one very pure and perfect act of love what the Saints shall for ever possess as the development and expression of the mysteries of His life. Then, truly, arose in His Heart what God has prepared for His Saints—glory and joy, ecstasies and the delights abounding in the hearts of Angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles and the just of all times. Jesus possessed all these concentrated in all their fulness in His Heart.

" Oh, blessedness of heart! never was any heart more worthy of possessing it! Jesus, Lord and God of heaven and earth, we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give Thee thanks for having revealed Thy glory, for having clothed Thyself with Thy divine attributes and for having at length ascended that throne which Thou hadst seemed to have abandoned! When Jesus shall appear to me in the glory of His resurrection, I shall be like Him, for I shall see Him as He is, and my heart shall then be in His Heart, inundated with His joys, which shall be mine." (Mgr. Baudry, 256–268.)

CHAPTER XII

PRAISE AND SUPPLICATION—THE FIVE JOYS OF THE HEART OF JESUS IN HIS RESURRECTION

AS the Sacred Heart has promised to reward those who should honour the joys of His resurrection, why should we not try to deserve those rewards? His devoted servant, Mechtilde, has drawn up a magnificent prayer in honour of His joys. Let us say it with her, especially during the Paschal octave:

"Praise, adoration, greatness, glory and blessing be to Thee, O good Jesus, for this ineffable joy, felt by Thee in Thy blessed Humanity, when Thy Father gave it divine glorification at Thy resurrection and conferred on all the elect the eternal glorification of His divinity. By this ineffable joy I beg of Thee, O loving Mediator between God and man, to keep for me in its integrity, by Thy grace, this glory which Thou then gavest me, so that I may meet it again at the day of Judgment. Amen.

"Praise, adoration, greatness, glory and blessing be to Thee, O good Jesus, for another ineffable joy. Thy boundless charity drew Thee from the bosom of the Father into this world where Thou didst submit to all its pains and miseries. At Thy resurrection this joy filled with unutterable happiness and gladness all Thy members, which on the Cross had been wrung with intolerable pain. By this unspeakable joy, I beg of Thee, O loving Mediator between God and man, to enlighten my mind and make me understand my own soul, so that I may always know what is pleasing to Thee. Amen.

"Praise, adoration, greatness, glory and blessing be to Thee, O good Jesus, for a third ineffable joy. It was

felt by Thy holy soul when it presented itself to God the Father as the price and pledge of eternal redemption, followed by the numberless multitude of blessed souls that it had then delivered from Limbo. By this great joy, I beg of Thee, O loving Mediator between God and man, to be the ransom of my soul at the hour of my death, the sum that will pay all my debts, appease in my favour God the Father, that just Judge, and conduct me with joy into His presence. Amen.

"Praise, adoration, greatness, joy and blessing be to Thee, O good Jesus, for another glorious joy. Thou didst experience it when God the Father gave Thee full power to reward, enrich and honour with Thy boundless liberality all thy friends, companions in the fight, whom Thou, in the midst of Thy glorious triumph, didst deliver from a tyrannical power. By this marvellous joy, O loving Mediator between God and man, I pray Thee to let me participate in all Thy labours and sufferings, and also in Thy glorious death and blessed resurrection. Amen.

"Praise, adoration, greatness, glory and blessing be to Thee, O good Jesus, for the last ineffable joy that Thou hadst when Thy Father gave Thee all Thy friends for Thy eternal inheritance and when that loving request and desire was fulfilled, 'I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me' (John xvii. 24). By this request all joy and all good, which is Thyself, became their portion for ever. By this delicious joy, O loving Mediator between God and man, I beg of Thee to associate me with this blessed company of Thy elect, so that I may possess Thee with them, Thee, all my joy and my whole good, now and in eternity. Amen."

CHAPTER XIII

LOVE BROUGHT BACK THE SON OF GOD TO HEAVEN

ON the day of the glorious ascension of Christ, our Saint found herself placed on a mountain. Love appeared to her under the appearance of a very beautiful virgin, who said to her: " I am she, whom thou didst see on the night of the holy nativity of Christ, surrounded with such splendour. It was I who caused the Son to come down from His Father's bosom on to the earth, and who now make Him to ascend into heaven;" and Love, taking the Lord into her arms, held Him up saying, " It is only in Thee that the plenitude of my power is to be seen." What wonderful words ! It is not in the creation of the earth and the heavens that God has manifested the power of His love, nor in the creation of man, the masterpiece of His Hands, nor even in Mary. Love raised Thee in her arms, O Mother of God, Immaculate Virgin, full of grace, but she could not say " In Mary I have shown all the fulness of my power." No, it was necessary that Thou shouldst give it to Thy Son, Jesus, our Brother, and our adorable Saviour.

The Lord Jesus ascending amidst an ineffable and triumphant jubilation presents Himself before God the Father. In His own person He offers to Him the souls of all the elect, not only of those who had ascended with Him, but also those who should do so later. He offered the works of each, its sufferings and its merits. Those who then were in a state of sin appeared each as they would be one day in heaven. Loving souls who suffer great things for Christ with patience shone in His Heart with a particular brilliancy, and others shone in different parts of His body.

The Heavenly Father received His Son with the greatest honour and said to Him: "I return to Thee the boundless happiness Thou didst seem to abandon in descending to the exile of the world, and I grant Thee full power to communicate the same unreservedly to all the souls whom Thou hast just now presented to Me."

Then our Lord Jesus offered to God the Father, in one offering, all the poverty, humiliations, contempt, pains, labours and other works of His sacred Humanity. It was an offering very pleasing to God; never had such a gift entered heaven. He offered to the Holy Spirit the unheard-of love that had filled His most holy Heart by spreading abroad the sweetest perfumes, the seven gifts which the Holy Spirit had poured on Him, and which He had caused to fructify so bountifully, for it is really only in Christ that the Holy Ghost has been able to make His gifts bear their fruit perfectly.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SACRED HEART MEDIATES BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

THE Sacred Heart is the mediator between God and man. From the first moment of His Incarnation, His Passion was always in the Heart of Christ and He offered it unceasingly to His Father: *Christi passio, quæ ejus Cordi semper exstitit intima, quam adhuc Patri repræsentat, pro homine incessanter interpellans.*"

Our Lord in heaven continues to intercede for us. He shows His eternal Father the wounds in His feet and hands and above all the wound in His Sacred Heart.

To-day, therefore, our Lord exercises the office of Mediator for each one of us. What a countless number of clients—all sinners, those in misery and suffering, and the dying, struggling in their agony! If the divine Pleader has a few good causes to sustain, how many are bad, nearly desperate? What solicitude He must show and what resources He must make use of, not only before God, but as to His unhappy clients. Who would not wish to see the Sacred Heart exercising this office? How meek, humble and patient, and especially merciful, He must be! St. Mechtilde had this great happiness, and she can describe to us the solicitude and vigilant love of our Mediator in His multiform and delicate ministry.

This mediation may be considered in reference to His Father and in reference to us.

In reference to His Father, it satisfies all the requirements of His justice.

"To me," said Jesus, "__ confided the concerns of men and I am their Mediator with the Father. A faithful servant collects carefully his master's income, and if he finds a deficit he supplies it from his own substance. In this way I offer the good gained by man's industry to My Father, increased a hundredfold; and wherever there is any imperfection, I supply for it, so that I may present to My heavenly Father, before all the Saints, the soul of man enriched with the most precious graces."

So great a generosity on the part of our divine Mediator fills us with astonishment. Not only does He pay our debts, but He wishes to enrich us! How this conduct of His Sacred Heart disconcerts our souls, always inclined to distrust! But He insists still further: "Come, let us see, do you not think Me sufficiently rich to pay all your debts?" To which Mechtilde replied: "Yes, Lord, I am certain Thou canst."

Our Lord: "Am I not rich enough to forgive and supply for all thy omissions?"

She replied: "Yes, Lord, I know that nothing is impossible to Thee." "Therefore," said our Lord, "I will answer fully and entirely for thee to My Father. I will offer for thee first that holy time, those nine months which I passed in My virginal Mother's womb. I will offer it for the time when thou, enclosed in thy mother's womb and stained with original sin, wert incapable of receiving My grace. I will then offer My holy birth for thy birth when, not yet regenerated in the baptismal font, thou wert estranged from Me.

"Then, I will offer the first days of My life, so pure, before I spoke, and those of My infancy, for the ignorance in which thou didst pass the same age. I will also offer the fervent desires of My childhood and youth to atone for the negligences of thine.

"I will offer the whole of My holy and perfect life on earth, with the fruit of My Passion, overflowing with My love, for all thy sins of commission and omission. In that way, in Me and by Me, all that thou standest in need of shall be supplied."

O infinite justice of God, exact from me as rigorous an account of all my iniquities and excesses as Thou wilt. I am not reduced to the Prophet's helplessness: *Si iniquitates observaveris Domine, Domine quis sustinebit?*" Behold the Heart of Jesus; from it, pay Thyself for all my debts. Thou wilt not exhaust my treasure; with the surplus I dare ask Heaven of Thee, and Heaven is Thyself.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHAT MANNER THE SACRED HEART EXERCISES THE OFFICE OF MEDIATOR TOWARDS US

CONSIDERED from our point of view the mediation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is of immense value. It is extended to all men, in all stations, in all their needs and misfortunes. The works of the Heart of Jesus fill the whole world! Its office is universal—everything lives, everything breathes, everything prospers, through it. Truth, grace, glory, all are from it, and its office is not a transient one which may fail and disappear, but is a fixed and permanent state.

Such is the Heart of Jesus, universal source of all that is good, beautiful, just, holy, under all forms, in every time, in all places, and of it one may say that the entire universe is full of its magnificence (Mgr. Baudry, 295).

St. Mechtilde recognized this magnificent prerogative of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Over and over again she declares that all comes from Him, on earth and in heaven. He is the universal treasure from which come pardon, life and glory. One day our Lord tried to make her understand this sublime office by an almost trivial comparison. It was to reward her for an act of humility. She had just received a wonderful grace, but, recognizing her lowliness, she exclaimed with a profound contempt for herself:

"O most generous King, so sublime a gift is unfit for me. I am 'unworthy to wash the dishes in Thy kitchen.'" Our Lord lovingly replied: "What dost thou call My kitchen and what are the dishes thou wouldst wash?"

Mechtilde, not knowing what to say, was silent. Our Lord, who sometimes raises a question so that He may be able to answer it Himself, at once said: "My kitchen is My divine Heart. The kitchen is a public room open to all, to slaves and to free. So My Heart is open always to all and disposed to grant to all what they desire. The *chef* of this kitchen is the Holy Spirit: in His inexhaustible liberality and with His sweet and priceless gifts He continually fills My Heart, and He fills it to overflowing. The vessels into which it overflows are the hearts of the Saints and of My elect, which are continually being filled with a wonderful sweetness from My divine Heart."

Therefore we see the Heart of Jesus is open to all men, and thither they must go to seek nourishment for their souls and true happiness of heart, *Cujuslibet delectamentum.* To express more clearly this precious attribute our Lord often had recourse to a similitude not less striking. "I offer you My Heart," He said one day to Mechtilde, addressing all her sisters through her, "I offer you My Heart," and at once she saw Him holding His Heart in His breast like a cup, and in this cup were gathered three organ pipes which signified the three dispositions of the divine Heart of our Lord on earth, dispositions in which He wished all to be who had recourse to His Heart.

First, the Heart of Christ was towards His Father full of reverence and love. Secondly, the Heart of Christ was towards men full of mercy and charity. Thirdly, the Heart of Christ was in itself full of humility and abjection.

And our Lord said to all who approached His Heart: "Drink and be inebriated, My dear friends." Mechtilde wished that all in heaven, on earth and in purgatory might share in this grace and come to drink at this sources Our Lord therefore offered His Heart to all these person. in the Church militant as well as in the Church triumph-

ant, that they might drink so delicious a draught. The Saints in heaven took long draughts from this Heart of sweetness and the joys of beatitude, while the children of the Church militant drank from it the waters of mercy. After which our Lord said: "I will drink of the hearts of all who drink of My Heart."

May we not make a comparison between this cup of the Sacred Heart and the cup the Psalmist speaks of? "I saw," he says, "in the hand of God a cup filled with three liquids (*Calix in manu Domini vini meri plenus mixto*): First there is the pure wine (*vini meri*), then the wine mixed (*plenus mixto*), and lastly the dregs (*verumtamen fœx ejus non est exinanita*)" (Ps. lxxiv. 7, 8). What is signified by the pure wine? Eternal joy, joy mixed with no evil nor with any bitterness. What is signified by the dregs but the pains of the lost, pains alleviated by no sweetness? And what is signified by the mixed wine but good and evil, whose nature can be changed according to us in this present life? (Bossuet.)

This cup which our Lord holds in his hand is the cup of His justice; and it is justice itself which pours in the three liquids, signifying the good of heaven, the evil of hell and the good and evil in this present life. But the cup which the Man-God hides in His breast is the cup of mercy whose waters wash the sinners of the earth, purify the stained souls in purgatory, and slake the thirst of the Saints in heaven.

O my God, I do not desire to drink of the cup of justice which is in Thy hand, but of the cup of mercy hidden in Thy Heart, *Da mihi hanc aquam*. I leave the first for sinners who reject Thee, O Sacred Heart of Jesus: *Bibent omnes peccatores terræ*.

From this teaching we learn that the Heart of Jesus is a mediation for all. To contemplate Him exercising this merciful function we must adopt some plan. The different subjects seem indicated to us by the diversity

of cases this Divine Mediator must plead for, the wants He must supply, the unfortunate He must help. The Sacred Heart of Jesus has among His clients, sinners, the just and souls consecrated to Him. He meets them at prayer, at the tribunal of penance, at the Holy Table and at Holy Mass. He leads them to a bed of pain, to the agony of death, to the flames of purgatory and at last to heaven. *Volumus videre Jesum.* O that we could see the designs of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with His own in all these different circumstances !

CHAPTER XVI

THE SACRED HEART IS THE SOURCE OF THE DIVINE LIFE WHICH WE RECEIVE IN BAPTISM

THE Christian by baptism becomes a member of Jesus Christ. Consequently he ought to live His life and look upon himself as another Jesus Christ, whether he works, rejoices or suffers. Every Christian ought to say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

The source and principle of this life is in the Sacred Heart. One day St. Mechtilde was giving thanks for the work of our Redemption. Having come to the part where she thanked Him for having been baptized for us, our Lord said to her, "I will baptize thee," and thereupon a great wave coming from the divine Heart seemed to inundate her soul. Then our Lord said: "I will also be thy godfather, and as godparents instruct their goddaughters I will teach thee three things.

"The first is to bear all sufferings corporal and spiritual not for thyself, but for Me, as if I bore them in thee.

"The second is to accept all blessings and all the services rendered to thee by men, with joy and gratitude, as if they were done for Me, and not for thee.

"The third is to live entirely for Me, so that thou dost look on thy works as belonging to Me and not to thee, seeing in thyself only a garment, with which I cover Myself to execute and direct all thy actions."

This intimate union, established between the soul and God in baptism, is called a participation in the divine nature: *Consortes divinæ naturæ.* Two comparisons in turn are employed to express the consequences and fruits

of this union; one is borrowed from St. Paul, and the other from our Blessed Lord.

To become a Christian is to put on Jesus Christ. So our Lord tells St. Mechtilde that the soul becomes His covering. To express the same thought St. Paul says that Jesus Christ covers the soul. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," he writes to the early Christians (Rom. xiii. 14); "walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called with all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 23); "for as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 1).

But where are prepared those Christian virtues which form, so to say, the garment or nuptial robe of the Christian? In the Heart of Jesus. Our good Mother will take them from there to clothe us.

Mechtilde one day begged this virgin Mother to obtain for her purity of mind and body. Then our Blessed Lady appeared to her, standing before our Lord, and she took a white garment from the divine Heart which she gave to her. Mechtilde wished to put it on, but a troop of demons stood on the right and on the left to prevent her wearing it. She then invoked our Blessed Lady, begging for her assistance, and at once she placed herself before the demons, covering Mechtilde with her shadow, and the devils disappeared. Mechtilde was then able to put on the white garment taken from the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Not only purity is to be found in this divine source, but all other virtues.

"I will Myself prepare thy garments, My beloved," said our Lord to His Spouse, "and I will clothe thee with them. Knowest thou not that worms spin the silk, and it is written of Me, 'I am a worm and no man'? (Ps. xxi.) I will spin garments for thee, out of My tender love,

and if thou canst not wear them alone, we will bear them together. Up to this present time, thou hast served Me devotedly in thy labours: in future thou shalt serve Me in practising the virtues of which I have given thee an example."

What a gracious image! The silkworm winds around its body its precious thread and finds in it its death, and the covering of this poor little creature becomes an ornament for kings and queens. He who was as despicable as a worm covered Himself with all human virtues. He died in that covering and calls us from the Cross to cover our nakedness with it.

The second comparison, which symbolizes the union of the baptized soul with the divine nature, is employed by our Lord Himself:

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abideth in Me the same beareth much fruit" (St. John xv.). The branch united to our Lord is fruitful, it spreads out, and becomes a vine for the Beloved. *Vinea dilecto.* "Oh," exclaimed St. Mechtilde, "would that my heart could always be a vine pleasing to Thy Heart." To which our Lord replied: "I can accomplish all that thou desirest," and it was revealed to her that the just man was God's vine and that God found pleasure in him who from his infancy until his death had sanctified his life for God. In the centre of the vineyard was a fountain and, near it, God was seated on a throne. From His Heart rushed a torrent of water into the fountain which our Lord made to overflow on those who longed for their own spiritual regeneration.

So we see the soul of the just man is like a vine watered by water flowing from the Sacred Heart. Under the similitude of wine, our Lord presents to us the works produced by His beloved vine. Works offered to God in infancy are like very pure wine and exceedingly sweet. The labour which a young man undertakes in order to

resist sin and temptation and the power of the enemy of our soul is as wine, red and strong. The acts of virtue accomplished by a man in his prime, for the love of God, are as wine, warm and very good. Then the different desires which tend to make a man aspire with all his strength to God and heavenly things, as also the pains and troubles of all sorts which ordinarily come to sadden old age, are like wine, as generous as nectar.

The vine that is planted in good ground and well exposed to the rays of the sun produces a more exquisite wine and is worthy of being served at a king's table. The same may be said of the vine of our hearts when it is warmed with the sun of charity.

"What wine do I give Thee to drink, my Beloved, when I pray for Thy friends?" Jesus answered Mechtilde, saying, "A very generous wine capable of making My Heart rejoice, as it is written: 'Wine may cheer the heart of man'" (Ps. liii.). "And when I pray for sinners?" "A very pure wine, sweeter than honey in the comb, thou presentest to Me when thou prayest for My enemies, who are in a state of damnation, so that they may be converted from their evil ways." "And when I pray for the dead?" "Thou givest Me a wine which always rejoices My Heart when thou prayest for these souls, so dear to Me, so that they may be delivered from their pains."

We can therefore give to the Sacred Heart of Jesus invitation for invitation. He says to us: "Come, eat My bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you (Ps. ix. 5). Eat, My friends, drink and be inebriated, My dearly beloved."

And we, in our turn, little chosen vines of the Master, may call thee, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, to drink the wine we have prepared for Him. Inebriate Thyself, O Lord, with these prayers; these good works offered for Thy friends, for sinners and for souls who suffer far from Thee.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MEANS OF LEADING A CHRISTIAN LIFE MUST BE SOUGHT IN THE SACRED HEART

THE prophet said: "You will draw waters of joy from the Saviour's fountains."

These holy fountains signify His wounds, and especially that in His Sacred Heart. A Christian must always be striving to approach nearer to this inexhaustible fountain and to draw from it the water which flows unto eternal life. Our Lord says to each one of us: "Enter and travel through My divine Heart, see its length and breadth; its length is the eternity of My goodness, and its breadth the love and the desire I have always had for thy salvation. Consider this length and breadth—that is, take possession of it, for all the good that thou dost find in My Heart really belongs to thee."

Therefore the source of life, grace, virtue and holiness is opened, and Jesus says: "Why should not a Christian receive what I very willingly offer him?" "I give him readily the treasure of the life I passed here on the earth in innocence and sanctity; let him take it for himself and seek in it a compensation for all his needs." Mechtilde replied: "If thou dost so much desire, my sweetest Jesus, that we should appropriate all that is Thine, tell me, I pray Thee, how it is to be done."

He replied: "Offer to God the Father all thy desires, intentions and prayers in union with My desires and prayers; all will unite and ascend to God, giving Him pleasure, as several perfumes burnt together cause only one column of smoke that rises straight to heaven. Any other prayer, even though it should reach heaven, could not be so pleasing to God."

"In the same way, if thou unitest thy labours and all thy works with My labours and My works, all that thou dost shall be ennobled; as brass melted with gold is no longer a common metal but is changed into precious gold. If a handful of wheat is thrown on to a heap of the same, it is immediately identified with it, and so the works of men, in themselves nothing, when joined to My works, are multiplied and changed to their advantage.

"In the third place, regulate thy whole life—viz., thy movements, strength, senses, thoughts, words, indeed everything according to My way of living, from which will result a new and a higher life. See a beautiful bird which flies from a fetid marsh and poisonous air; it takes a new life in better surroundings. So the earthly man, in the life he has hitherto led, becomes heavenly in the new life he receives, united with Me."

Therefore, beloved souls, let us receive with great gratitude so great a favour from heaven. Let us take possession of the most holy life of Christ to supply for what is wanting in ours. Let us also study, according to our ability, to conform ourselves to His virtues; this will be our greatest glory, in our eternal home. What glory could be greater than to approach, in some way, the splendour of the eternal light?

CHAPTER XVIII

MARY'S ASSISTANCE WITH THE SACRED HEART

OUR blessed Lady is the Mother of baptized Christians; she is charged to develop in them the life of her divine Son which they receive in baptism. The *Book of Special Grace* shows us the solicitude of this devoted Mother. Whether it is to develop His life in us or to renew it, it is to the Heart of her Son that she always leads us. Better than the Apostles, she understood those words at the Last Supper: "I am the vine, you the branches, he that abideth in Me beareth much fruit" (John xv.).

One Saturday while they were singing the Mass, *Salve Sancta Parens*, Mechtilde saluted our Blessed Lady, begging of her to obtain for her true holiness, and the glorious Virgin answered her: "If thou desirest true holiness, keep near my Son, who is holiness itself and who sanctifies all things." Mechtilde asked how she was to carry out this advice, and our Lady answered with great kindness: "Keep before thee His holy infancy, that thereby His innocence may supply for all the actions and omissions of thy infancy. Keep before thee His fervent youth, which was so full of love, that it alone would suffice to enkindle the furnace of divine love; by it the lukewarmness and idleness of thy youth shall be repaired. Keep before thee His divine virtues, which will ennoble and elevate thy actions.

"Keep also my Son before thy eyes in directing to Him all thy thoughts, words and actions. He who did all things perfectly will efface all that is imperfect in them.

"Rely also on Him, as a spouse relies on her husband; she is fed and clothed at his expense, and for love of him

she cherishes and honours his family and friends. The soul must be nourished by the word of God, as by the choicest food; it must be clothed and adorned carefully with what pleases Him—*i.e.*, with the example of His virtues, which it should strive to imitate. It should make His family its own—that is, His Saints—love them, praise God on their account and incite them often to praise its Beloved with it. In this way will the soul also be holy according as it is written, 'With the holy thou wilt be holy' (Ps. xviii. 26), in the same way as a queen is queen because she participates in the dignity of the king."

To keep with Jesus, that is the secret of all holiness; to keep with Jesus in all the vicissitudes of our life, with Him in the mysteries of His infancy, of His youth, of His life and death, of His resurrection and glory. Happy he who understands this secret! He will soon attain, and without great efforts, to a Christian life even in its perfection.

It is certain that some day or other great obstacles may arise on the narrow way that leads to heaven, but the Sacred Heart will be with us to enable us to overcome them. There is, above all, one that we shall escape easily, if we remain constantly faithful to Him, according to our Lady's recommendation, and that is, taking pride in ourselves. The Heart of Jesus throws so much light on our soul and its imperfections that we shall escape this natural satisfaction and pride and the indolence which results from it.

The servant of God was one day forced to complain to our Blessed Lady of an obstacle she thought would prevent her progress in the service of God. The Blessed Mother said to her: "Go and present thyself to my Son respectfully."

She then prostrated herself at our Saviour's feet, and on rising she saw upon His breast what appeared to her

to be a very brilliant mirror; and from this there seemed to come forth other mirrors which covered the whole of His sacred Person. She understood this to mean that all the members of Christ in their various operations shine before us like mirrors, and that all these operations proceed from the love of His Heart.

His feet, which are His desires, burn for us; He must see how cold are our desires for spiritual things, and how helpless for human things.

The knees of Christ are for us mirrors of humility. They were bent so often for us in prayer, and also when He washed His Apostles' feet. In this we can recognize our pride, which prevents us from humbling ourselves, though we are but dust and ashes.

The Heart of Christ is for us a mirror of the most burning love where we may see clearly the coldness of our own hearts towards God and our neighbour.

The mouth of Christ is for us a mirror of sweet words, full of praise and thanksgiving. We can recognize by it the worthlessness of our words and the omissions of which we are guilty in divine praise and in prayer.

The eyes of our Lord are for us the mirrors of divine truth; in them we may see the darkness caused by our unfaithfulness, which prevents us from knowing the truth.

The ears of our Lord are for us the mirrors of obedience, for He was always ready to obey God His Father and to listen to our prayers.

The baptized soul must therefore love the Sacred Heart of Jesus, if it wishes to live the divine life of which it received the seed in the waters of baptism. From this Sacred Heart flow the waters of eternal life. Mechtilde saw these precious waters rush out and flow over souls. She called them now a river, then a stream, and again a spring; but the river, the spring and the stream were able to purify all souls.

The river, she says, flows from the Heart of Jesus,

inundating souls, penetrating them entirely, chasing away sadness and spreading around the joy of the City of God. The little stream from the Heart of Jesus hides itself in the baptismal waters in order to flow over all those who receive spiritual regeneration. The humble spring of living and limpid waters flows gently from the Sacred Heart into souls full of love for Him.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHURCH ENSHRINED IN THE SACRED HEART

"MY beloved had a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place, and he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a wine-press therein, and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now ye inhabitants of Jerusalem and ye men of Juda, judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the man of Juda, His pleasant plant, and I looked that he should do judgment and behold iniquity" (Isaias v.).

The vineyard of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the holy Catholic Church, which He founded in His blood and in His love on the tree of the Cross. It has given abundantly the fruits of sanctity, chastity and all virtues.

This gracious allegory is beautifully developed in the *Book of Special Grace.*

One Sunday, while they were singing the *Asperges me*, Mechtilde said to our Lord: "My Lord, with what wilt Thou presently purify my soul?"

At once our Lord, with an inexpressible sweetness of love, stooped towards her as a mother might to her son, and took her into His arms, saying: "It is with the love of My divine Heart that I will wash thee."

He opened the door of His Heart, that treasury of divine compassion, and she entered as into a vineyard. She there saw a river of living water flowing from east

to west, on the banks twelve trees bearing twelve fruits; they were the virtues enumerated by St. Paul in his epistle—viz., charity, peace, patience, joy, etc. (Gal. x. 22). The river was the river of love. The soul entered into this vineyard and was at once cleansed from all its stains. Our Lord said to her: "My vineyard is also the Catholic Church. I laboured in it with pain and sweat during thirty-three years; come and work with Me in this vineyard." Mechtilde replied: "And how shall I do this?" Our Lord answered: "By watering." At once Mechtilde rushed to the river. To work in our Lord's vineyard is therefore to water it with the waters drawn from the river of love.

To show men how much God loves them, or even to increase that love in their hearts, is truly God's work, and that of His Son, Jesus; it must therefore be the object of all our efforts with the souls who are subject to us.

Our Lord showed Mechtilde the souls of those who are members of the Church under different similitudes according to their dispositions. In this way, she saw loving souls who had separated themselves from the vanities of the world and plunged into the source of all good, the Heart of Jesus Christ. She saw souls, thoroughly Christian, who raised their thoughts to God after having despised the world and its pleasures. She also saw souls lying steeped in sin, some ready to repent and others hardened in sin, rejecting God's grace. Let us examine the tenderness of the Sacred Heart for each and all these souls redeemed by His precious blood.

CHAPTER XX

THE SACRED HEART AND SINNERS

FROM the first moment of the Incarnation, the Heart of Jesus offered for sinners the drops of Precious Blood that He had just received from the Immaculate Heart of His Mother. An ardent desire to shed this blood then took possession of His Sacred Heart and became a real agony (*coarctor*). This abiding desire explains why forgiveness, with so much delicacy, was so easily granted to Magdalen, to the woman taken in adultery, to the Samaritan, to Zacheus and to the paralytic. But if love, according as it is bestowed, makes of us either Saints or sinners, what shall the immense love which Jesus bears to sinners make of Him? This love makes Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the Good Shepherd who follows the strayed sheep, the Father who receives the prodigal with joy. The work of this love is eternal; it confirms the Heart of Jesus in the three dispositions of which we have already spoken. He is always the Victim slain for us. He is always the Good Shepherd seeking His lost sheep. He always rejoices, like the Father in the Gospel, at the return of a repentant sinner.

These three dispositions of the Sacred Heart make us thrill with hope when we realize them in the Holy Gospels. Could we only realize them now in Jesus so close to us, in the tabernacle! Let us listen to the sweet Saint who had the privilege, like St. John, of hearing the beatings of the divine Heart.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SACRED HEART A PERPETUAL VICTIM

OUR Lord appeared one day to St. Mechtilde with His Hands outstretched and His open wounds. "When I was hanging on the Cross," He said, "all My wounds were bleeding, each of them a voice interceding with My Father for the salvation of men, and they still cry to Him to appease His wrath against sinners.

"As I, in My human nature, offered Myself to God the Father with ineffable love, covered with blood, a victim on the altar of the Cross, so with the same love I offer Myself now to the Father for sinners, I present to Him all the instruments of My Passion, for what I most desire is that the sinner should be converted and live."

If this sinner is converted, the divine Victim thrills with joy; but if he resists the graces offered by the Sacred Heart, He feels the sad effects and seems to have found an executioner.

"As long as a sinner remains in sin, he keeps Me stretched and fastened to the Cross, but as soon as he is converted and repentant he detaches Me, and as if I had really been detached from the Cross I fall, with all my weight on him, as formerly on Joseph of Arimathea, with My grace and mercy; I give Myself into his hands, so that he may do with Me as he will."

On leaving the banqueting hall Magdalen only carried with her the assurance of her forgiveness; we, poor sinners, may carry Jesus Himself.

CHAPTER XXII

IN HEAVEN THE SACRED HEART IS STILL THE HEART OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

CAN anything more sweet or more touching be imagined than the solicitude of the Good Shepherd for His strayed sheep? This solicitude is still as great and as unwearying in the Heart of Jesus.

"I follow," He tells us, "this sinful soul ceaselessly, and when it returns to Me, by repentance, desire or love, I rejoice exceedingly. It is impossible to confer a greater favour on a debtor than to bestow on him the means to pay his debts: I have become, in a way, a debtor to My Father, by undertaking to satisfy for the sins of men, so I can wish for no greater joy than to see men return to Me by repentance and love."

Not content with following the lost sheep Himself, the Good Shepherd wishes to associate us with Him in this ministry of salvation. Like St. Mechtilde, we feel indignant with those who refuse our help and the graces offered by Jesus. But He says to us, as to the Sons of Zebedee: "You know not of what spirit you are." "See, leave Me to act, and pray for these poor sinners that I have bought with a great price and for whose conversion I long so ardently. He who desires to pray and be heard for those who are captive either in body or in soul, by sin, let him pray to Me by the love of My Heart; by that love which held Me captive nine months in the Virgin's womb; by that love which bound Me in swaddling clothes and delivered Me in fetters into the hands of wicked men. Let him pray by the love which bound Me in chains, when led by the Jews before the judge; by the love which bound Me to the pillar to be

scourged; which nailed Me with so much shame to the cross; which after death enveloped Me in a winding sheet. By that love which bound Me in all these different circumstances, let him beg of Me to deliver this captive from the bonds of sin."

How powerful is this prayer for sinners! One day St. Mechtilde was soliciting ardently the conversion of all those in a state of sin, and our Lord said to her: "Very well! For thy prayers I will convert a hundred sinners."

The Sacred Heart always rejoices over the Return of Sinners.

Paternal love is the explanation of all we read in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the joy with which the Father receives his guilty child, the facility with which he grants him forgiveness and reinstates him in all his rights! His son was dead, and his son is risen again. He is like Jacob, happy in clasping to his breast Joseph his well-beloved, whom he supposed devoured by wild beasts!

If the Heart of Jesus feels a similar joy when a sinner is converted it is because it is full of a love as great as that of a father for his son. Nothing, He tells us, makes Me so happy as to possess man's heart, which I enjoy so rarely. I have everything in abundance, except man's heart, which so often evades Me.

"But when this poor human heart is contrite and broken with sorrow and cries out, 'I will arise and go to my Father,' the Sacred Heart thrills with joy. I say to thee, that no matter how great his sins may be, at that same moment, if he sincerely repents, I forgive all his sins, and My Heart inclines towards him with as much mercy and sweetness as though he had never sinned."

"O depth really unfathomable!" adds St. Mechtilde.

" Oh, the depth of Thy wisdom and Thy mercy! God most clement, by so many different and admirable ways Thou dost draw the hearts of sinners to Thyself; they cannot then despair, since Thy paternal call is followed by so much mercy."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INVITATIONS GIVEN BY THE SACRED HEART TO THOSE WHO WISH TO DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO ITS SERVICE

"I HAVE chosen you," our Lord said to His Apostles. "I have called you," He also says to the friends of His divine Heart. The reason of this choice and of this call is the love with which He is consumed for us. Oh, you who hear its voice, harden not your hearts, but appreciate God's gift, and force yourselves to return Him love for love. But how can we hear this voice, how understand this language of the Sacred Heart?

In an ecstasy, which raised Mechtilde out of herself, she saw the King of Glory: Mary, the Queen of heaven, was at His right: Mechtilde placed herself on the left, then laying her head on the breast of Jesus she listened, with the ears of her heart, to the violent and continual beatings of the Sacred Heart of Christ.

The beatings of the divine Heart sounded as though they would say to the soul: "Come and repent, come and be reconciled, come and be consoled, come and be blessed; come, friend, and receive all that one friend can give another. Come, sister, and take possession of the inheritance that I have bought with My Precious Blood. Come, spouse, and rejoice in My divinity."

This delightful invitation was addressed not only to the favoured Benedictine, but to all souls of good will. This is proved in another divine communication: Leaning her head on the breast of her Beloved, Mechtilde heard three distinct beatings. Our Lord said to her: "These three beatings signify three words I wish to address to the loving soul. This is the first: 'Come and separate

thyself from creatures.' The second: 'Enter with the confidence of a spouse.' The third: 'Into the mystical couch which is the divine Heart.'"

By these words she understood that God first calls the soul chosen from all others, causes it to renounce all the joy it could find here below and to attach itself to the Lord its God with an entire devotedness. Then our Lord fills it with confidence and the chosen soul, as a spouse who never fears a refusal, full of assurance, goes forward to the nuptial couch of His divine Heart, wherein abounds and overflows all the happiness that the heart of man could desire.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHAT THE SACRED HEART WISHES TO BE FOR US

THE Son of God deigns to lower Himself to each of us. He stands at our door and knocks, saying: "O son of man, give Me thy heart and receive Mine." As soon as the soul answers, "Enter, O well-beloved Lord," He takes possession of us, but by a happy exchange we take possession of Him. "The bee," He tells us, "does not fly with greater eagerness to the green meadows than do I to thy soul when it calls Me. Now My Heart is thine and thy heart is Mine." And in a sweet embrace and by all His divine virtues He attracts this soul so that it seems, in future, to be one with Him.

And what will be, for each one of us, this Heart which only aims at giving itself and putting itself entirely at our service? The passing union between the divine Heart and ours at Holy Communion cannot satisfy us. "O unparalleled sweetness, remain, I pray Thee, with me; for the day of my life draws towards evening." It was the wail of St. Mechtilde, and is also ours; but listen to the reply of the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

"I shall remain with thee as a Father with his son, giving thee a share in the heavenly inheritance that I acquired for thee during My thirty-three years on earth; all that shall be given to thee and shall be thine. I shall also be with thee as a friend with his friend: he who has a faithful friend takes refuge with him in time of trial and is devoted to him. So thou shalt always have in Me the most faithful Friend, a safe refuge in all thy needs; in thy weakness thou shalt lean on Me and I will always come faithfully to thy assistance. I shall also be always with thee as a Spouse with his spouse: between whom

there could be no separation, except through illness; but if thou shouldst fall ill, thou wilt find in Me the most skilful physician; I will cure thee of any sickness. So there is no separation possible for us, but an eternal and inseparable union. I will also be with thee as a traveller with his companion. If one of them is laden with a weight too heavy, the other immediately takes part of the burden on himself, so will I, without fail, help thee to carry all thy loads, which will then seem light to thee."

Who would not joyfully accept an alliance with such advantages? The Sacred Heart itself becomes our Father, Friend, Spouse, Physician, Companion of our journey to eternity, carrying with us the burden of life.

Mechtilde had heard before, several times, the nature of this alliance. Our Lord said to her on different occasions: "I give thee My soul, it will be thy companion and guide, entrust it with all thou hast. When thou shalt be in sorrow, it will console thee, and in all circumstances it will be for thee a faithful helper."

Ashamed to have neglected this great favour, Mechtilde cried out: "Alas, my Lord, life of my soul; forgive me, Loving Guide, Noble Companion whom I have so rarely invited to share my labours and whose aid I have not sought when I ought to have done so."

Our Lord replied: "I forgive thee. My soul shall remain with thee until the end of thy life; then it will unite thee with the Divinity; as I, dying on the Cross, remitted My Spirit into the hands of the Father, so it will then offer thee to My heavenly Father."

After this comforting assurance Mechtilde begged our Lord to grant to a person who was her faithful friend what He had just granted to her, and, at once, she saw her before our Lord, and He taking her hands gave her possession of all His goods.

O St. Mechtilde, pray also for us and obtain for us a like favour!

CHAPTER XXV

THE SACRED HEART IS THE SOURCE OF FERVOUR

JESUS made to St. Margaret Mary magnificent promises in favour of persons who were devoted to His Sacred Heart. Tepid souls were to become fervent and fervent souls to reach a high perfection. In the thirteenth century our Lord had already made the same promises and verified them in those chosen by His love.

St. Mechtilde had a tender devotion for the Heart of Jesus. Often she happened, when tepid and less fervent, to feel the divine Heart unite itself with her heart, like liquid gold, and the approach of this fire produced in her so much sweetness that she was soon glowing with her accustomed great love.

"The love of the Sacred Heart watches with great care over the souls that have consecrated themselves to its service. Therefore whenever a man feels his devotion diminished, his heart becoming cold, and perceives that he has strayed from God, he ought to call on this Love, entrust to it all his desires, praying it to obtain for him the grace or zeal of true devotion. He should also beg Love to guard all the good he does, and Love will preserve it carefully in the casket of the divine Heart, returning it faithfully to the soul, increased and ennobled. In all his sorrows and trials let him call Love to his help. With Love man feels not weakness and faints not in adversity."

The soul is therefore reanimated in fervour when it casts itself into the Sacred Heart and calls on its burning Love. And indeed, whatever may be the nature of the weakness which overwhelms it, an efficacious remedy will always be found for it in this Heart.

One day when Mechtilde was honouring the divine wounds, she saw they were surrounded by precious stones, and as she was astonished at this our Lord said to her: "Precious stones possess great qualities and may sometimes chase away great sickness; in the same way My wounds are so efficacious that they drive away all languor from men's souls. Some men have such weak, trembling hearts that they never dare to trust in My tenderness and they try to fly from Me. One would say they had the palsy. If they would take refuge in My Passion, honouring tenderly My wounds, I would soon deliver them from all fear. Others have restless, fickle hearts; they never stop to think; at the smallest word they give way to impatience or even anger. If they would recall My Passion, if they penetrated their minds with the remembrance of My wounds, they would acquire stability and find patience. There are others who have a sleeping paralysis. I mean all those who do all lazily and carelessly. They, too, at the remembrance of My Passion and the consideration of the depth and pain of My wounds would be aroused from their tepidity."

But of all our Saviour's wounds we must have special recourse to that of His Heart.

Praying for a person under this spiritual torpor, Mechtilde saw her soul in the divine Heart under the appearance of a little child. She tried to hold this divine Heart in her hands. Our Lord said: "May she always come to Me so in her sorrows, and may she cling to My divine Heart, seeking there consolation, and I will never abandon her."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SACRED HEART AND ITS UNION WITH SOULS

"I TO my Beloved and my Beloved to me." These words of the Spouse in the Canticles express the intimate union between Jesus and the faithful soul. This union is the greatest desire of Jesus. "My delights are," He tells us, "to be with the children of men." It is also the greatest desire of the loving soul. "Thou in me and I in Thee. Grant that we may eternally remain so united." Who will give me, Lord, to be so united with Thee that I may be absorbed in Thee so as to forget myself?

It is therefore the happiest of all days when Love says to us, as to St. Mechtilde: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." Hearing this, she was rapt in God, and as a drop of water mingled with wine is changed entirely into wine, so this blessed soul, entering into God, became one and the same spirit with Him. United thus she annihilated herself, but God raised her, saying: "I will pour into thee all that a human heart can contain, and I will increase My graces in thee as far as a creature can receive them."

Love added: "Rest here, leaning on the Heart of Him who loves thee. Be not uneasy in prosperity, taste in peace the remembrance of all thy Beloved has done for thee, so as to be without fear in adversity."

Every day, at the Altar, in the mystery of the Consecration and the Communion, the marvellous fact of our union with the Sacred Heart really takes place.

One day during Mass, Mechtilde saw numberless graces flowing from the Heart of Jesus on faithful souls.

She was seized with a great longing to see her own heart plunged entirely into the divine Heart. At once, she felt that it was thrown into this adorable Heart, as a fish into the water.

In her ardent devotion she implored our Lord to teach her what dispositions she should have in her heart so as to remain in the happy union with which she was favoured. At once, the Sacred Heart appeared to her as a beautiful and spacious dwelling, and in this dwelling she saw a smaller one.

" It is in this way," said our Lord, " that thy soul is always enclosed in My Heart, and I in the heart of thy soul. Thou possessest Me within thee and I am more intimately united to thee than anything else can be, and yet My divine Heart is so great and so superior to thy soul that it seems unable to attain thereto."

Mechtilde also saw in this dwelling of the divine Heart four beautiful Virgins. They were Humility, Patience, Meekness and Charity, this last more beautiful than the others. Our Lord said to her: " Strive to become intimate with these Virgins and to obtain their friendship if thou wilt remain with Me in this dwelling of My Heart and enjoy My presence. When vanity shall endeavour to weaken thy heart, remember My charity. It was so strong that it drew Me from My rest in the bosom of the Father, made Me descend into the Virgin's womb, wrapped Me in swaddling clothes and laid Me in a manger; it obliged Me to endure great labours and to preach and finally made Me die a bitter and shameful death. The remembrance of these things will drive out all vanity from thy heart.

" In the same way, when thou shalt be tempted by pride, remember My humility. It always prevented Me from lifting Myself up, ever so little, in My thoughts, words or actions. Instead, I always showed in all My works an example of the most perfect humility.

" When inclined to impatience, remember My patience. I kept it always in poverty, hunger and thirst, in My wanderings and in the midst of injuries and insults, and, above all, in death.

" In temptations to anger, in the same way remember My meekness; with those who hated peace, I was peaceful and meek, to such a degree, that I obtained from My Father the forgiveness of My executioners.

" In this way thou shalt triumph over vices by virtues."

In this way also we may dwell in the Heart of Jesus, live His Life, be animated with His Spirit and consumed with His love. But if the soul has entered into the divine Heart, it is in order to enjoy the treasures it contains. It opens: our Lord draws the soul and says to it: " The higher part of My Heart, that nearest to the Divinity, shall pour down on thee the sweetness of the Holy Spirit. It shall distil ceaselessly on thee the dew of its grace. In the eagerness of thy desires raise thine eyes to Him; open thy mouth and breathe in the sweetness of divine grace according as it is said in the Psalms: 'I opened my mouth, and panted: because I longed for Thy commandments' (Ps. cxviii. 131).

" In the lower part of My Heart, that which is nearest to My Humanity, thou wilt find a treasure containing all good things in great abundance to satisfy all thy desires."

Our Lord then developed this thought, giving to His Sacred Heart, as to the world, four cardinal points. He added: " In the east of My Heart thou wilt find the light of true wisdom; it will make thee know and accomplish entirely My will. In the western part, thou shalt behold a delightful paradise; there thou shalt always be with Me, seated at my table."

What a magnificent similitude and what sublime possibilities this makes us see! The Sacred Heart of Jesus is associated in the divine act which sends the Holy

Spirit into our souls, spreading in it the sweetness of His grace. The Sacred Heart, source of that blood which redeemed the world, and centre of the sorrows of the Passion, contains all the treasures that any soul might crave. It is the sun which gives light; it is the place of rest for souls in heaven. An our Lord speaks to our soul and says: "Let it seek in My Heart all that it desires and needs, and let it ask it of Me as a child who asks its father for all it wants. Does it need purity? Let it have recourse to My innocence. Humility? Let it take it from Me. Let it find there also the spirit of holy desires and take with confidence My love and the holy and divine manner in which I acted during My life on earth."

A Last Prayer: "O My God! I beg of Thee to be merciful to My soul at its last hour, giving it the assurance that it will rest on Thee." And our Lord replied at once: "What wise man would throw away and destroy a loved treasure gained with great labour? In My Humanity I sanctified the whole man. In Baptism I vivified by My Spirit all that is spiritual in him. Let him therefore keep himself always united to Me on two points: let him trust to Me all that is in man as temptations and trials, offering and uniting them to My Humanity; then let him direct to Me all his spiritual affections, such as his hope, love and joy, and in this way I will never abandon him."

O Sacred Heart, we will trust in thee during our whole life and especially at the hour of our death. *Fiat.*

CHAPTER XXVII

CONSECRATED SOULS: THEIR VOCATION

IN heaven those who are virgins are specially loved by the Sacred Heart of Jesus. From this Heart flow endless joys which first rest in the loving heart of its Virgin Mother and from her flow into the hearts of all virgins.

Feeling and seeing all the love and tenderness of the Sacred Heart for virgins, Mechtilde was filled with admiration and gratitude for the marvellous goodness of God, and our Lord said to her: "I have honoured virgins above all the other Saints, granting them three privileges.

"The first is My love which surpasses that of all other creatures. Therefore as soon as the first virgin had taken her vow of chastity I was so filled with love that not being able to restrain Myself, I came down from heaven to enter entirely into her.

"The second is the wealth which I shower on them. All that I possess, all that I have suffered, I give them for their own.

"The third is the glory which surpasses all other glory. At their approach I rise, I speak to them in sweet mysterious words, and they only can enjoy when they will My holy embrace."

Then Mechtilde said: "Most loving Lord, what must those fortunate virgins, chosen by Thee, be to enjoy such privileges?" Jesus answered: "Noble, beautiful, and rich. The virgin worthy of the name, chosen for My spouse, must be noble in humility, she must believe herself of no account, thinking of herself as beneath every other creature and deserving merely contempt and ab-

jection. The more humble she is the more noble she shall be in the glory of heaven. As for Me, I will add My humility to hers, and this will be for her the highest nobility. I wish her also to be beautiful—that is, patient; the more patient she is the more beautiful she shall be, for to her sufferings I will add those of My Passion. To complete her beauty I will clothe her with reflections of the divine beauty, which I received from My Father before the creation of the world.

" She must also be rich in virtue. She must heap up riches of all the virtues, and she will then receive from Me the incomparable treasure of My virtues, and so she will have an abundance to overflowing of eternal joys."

Humility as title-deed to nobility; Patience for ornament; Virtues for riches. These are the three conditions exacted by the Sacred Heart from a soul that is to be His spouse.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TIME OF TRIAL

THE soul that would consecrate itself to the Lord Jesus in the religious state must during the novitiate submit to a severe training. It must break its will, subdue its character, overcome its nature, accustom itself to the requirements of the Rule and of the common life. Jesus is with such souls, and His Sacred Heart longs to unite them more and more with Him by the bonds of love. *Per amoris unionem.*

" I will walk in their midst," He said to St. Mechtilde, who was praying for the young recruits in the Monastery of Helfta, " and I will dwell in them and they shall be My people (2 Cor. vi. 16). I will walk in their midst by their holy desires and good will, and I will dwell in them by love; they shall be My people by this life, holy and worthy of praise, and by the good and increase they bring to the Church. All whom they shall attract by their good example, their virtues or their instructions, whom they shall win by their prayers, when they pray for the spread of the Faith, for the conversion of sinners, for the deliverance of souls from their pains, all these shall be considered as My people.

" They should apply themselves carefully to the following practices: frequent and fervent prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures and listening to them with pleasure, working assiduously, obeying the Rule, observing with love all the regulations appointed for them, perfect humility in everything, never thinking themselves equal to others and despising no one. While they pray in these dispositions I will teach them My will and all that shall be necessary for them; in reading I will teach them My

sweetness. I will sanctify them in their labours, in obeying and in the observance of the Rule I will have pity on them, I will strengthen them and help them, and in their humility; I will rest in them."

But let the young betrothed of Christ be attentive to see this God, so full of tenderness, everywhere, as He is always with them in the labours of the Novitiate. And what will He do for them on the day of their Virginal Espousals with Him? He will, on that day, transform them and make them less unworthy of Him. "In order to prepare for this great day, they must," He says, "beg Me to give them intelligent eyes to see Me and to know what is for their good; obedient ears, ready for every command and will of their Superiors, a wise mouth in order to celebrate My praise, to teach and say what is profitable for others. Let them plead with Me to give them a loving heart which will love Me and love all purely in Me and for Me, and to have also a share in good works; then what they do shall be done carefully and attentively."

When the Litany was said for the newly Professed, St. Mechtilde saw our Blessed Lady, and then each Saint, as he was named, rise and kneel reverently before our Lord, praying for them. And while they made their holy Profession our Lord Jesus Christ received them lovingly into His arms, giving them His right hand to strengthen them in keeping their vows, and to protect them from all evil. When they approached to receive Holy Communion, each found herself closely united to Him in a sweet embrace.

CHAPTER XXIX

TEPIDITY

SOMETIMES souls who are bound by religious profession to the service of God forget the gravity of their engagements. Without entirely breaking the bonds which unite them to the divine Heart they allow them little by little to get slack and so fall into numerous acts of negligence. In the Life of St. Margaret Mary, we see the divine Spouse irritated by the tepidity of His unfaithful spouses, asking for public reparation. Something of the same kind is narrated for us in the *Book of Special Grace.*

One Friday Mechtilde saw our Lord standing on the altar, His hands outstretched, blood pouring abundantly from His wounds as during His Passion. He said to her: "See, all My wounds are reopened in order to appease the anger of the Father against you."

The glorious Virgin Mary stood at her Son's right hand. On her head was placed a beautiful crown in which, like precious pearls, shone her virtues, merits and all the great things that God had deigned to work in her. Mechtilde, drawing near, begged her to pray for herself and the Order. The Queen of Heaven, at once, bending her knees before her Son, honoured devoutly His wounds with great respect. She commanded Mechtilde to do the same. "Come, also," she said to her, "honour the wounds in the beloved Heart of My Son which caused Him to bear all the sufferings of His body."

When Mechtilde had gladly done this, she begged our Lord to reveal to her what He most wished her to do for the increase of religion. He replied: "He who really

wishes to become religious must keep his eyes from all forbidden or even useless looks. He must abstain from hearing anything that might sully his heart; he must prevent his mouth from ever uttering a useless word, and if he has seen or heard anything evil he must never permit his mouth to speak of it. Above all, he must guard his heart and watch that it never takes pleasure in bad thoughts and that it never dwells on them willingly. Man cannot prevent such thoughts from presenting themselves, but he can easily drive them away, so as not to consent to them, nor dwell on them willingly. He must also carefully watch his actions, and whenever he finds he has done wrong on some point, his heart must have no rest until he has asked God's pardon and purposed going to Confession as soon as possible."

To understand well the signification of this lesson of Jesus to His humble servant we must remember that He appeared to her in the state of a Victim. He therefore does not speak of religious virtues which console His Heart, but of faults and negligences which sadden it. The perfection He exacts from His spouses does not, of course, admit of any wilful sin, but furthermore, as we shall see later, it expects the practice of all religious virtues.

This lesson of the Sacred Heart addressed to Religious is given here as a reproach. In another place He repeats it as a counsel to a soul whom He wishes to draw to His love.

" How I should love to be Thy slave !" St. Mechtilde said to Him one day. Our Lord replied: " He who would be a slave on earth must deny to his eyes all that is forbidden and useless and restrain them in all things; and I in the glory of heaven will open the eyes of that person, revealing to him the brightness of My face, and I will manifest My glory to him. I will show Myself to him in such a delightful way that all the heavenly court shall be in joy and admiration." " And also to him who keeps

his ears captive and prevents them hearing anything that is useless or hurtful I will sing sweetly a melody of special glory in eternity." "He who puts a check on his lips, to prevent idle or hurtful words, shall receive from Me the great gift to open them to My praise and to celebrate My glory more worthily than others." "He who keeps his heart from all vain or evil thoughts, from all improper desires, shall be liberally rewarded by Me; he shall obtain from Me all he desires and his heart shall taste great liberty and happiness without end in My divine Heart. He who binds his hands that they may commit no sin will be delivered from all toil. I will give him a glorious and eternal rest, I will bestow on his good actions united to Mine so much honour that all the celestial Court will receive an increase of joy."

CHAPTER XXX

THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

FOR a soul consecrated to God it is not sufficient to hate evil, be it ever so heartily; it must also have a great love for all the virtues of its holy state. *Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu.* Its thoughts, affections, desires and all its works must be in harmony with those of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Blessed John Eudes tells us: "The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are only One Heart, for they are animated with the same desires and burn with the same love." In the same way, one ought to be able to say that the Heart of Jesus and the heart of a Religious make only one heart.

St. Mechtilde was praying for her sisters, asking God to increase His grace in them, making them abound in virtue and good works of every kind. She received this answer from our Lord: "As long as I find in them humble submission, love of virginal purity, loving gratitude and tender love, I will never turn away from them the protecting eyes of a Father, and I will never forsake them in their needs."

A humble submission—that is, obedience to their Superiors—and a gentle, simple deference among themselves.

Love of virginal purity, which does not merely consist in preserving virginity, but also in the love they must have for chastity, in the care with which they must guard their hearts and senses in order to avoid all that could stain them. A present lovingly received is so treated, it is considered very valuable, and great care is taken that it should be neither lost nor spoilt.

A loving gratitude, which causes them to accept from

God with thanksgiving not only spiritual gifts, but also what is necessary for the body, as clothing and food, they will receive all with a loving, contented heart, always thinking that more is given than they have deserved. A tender love with which they will love God sincerely and each other for God, striving to outdo each other in kind deeds.

But of all the virtues suitable to Religious, the Heart of Jesus prefers Obedience. The gift of Perseverance is its fruit. "From the day that a Religious gives up to Me her own will and leaves it in the hands of her Superiors, I have received her into My arms; I shall not allow her to go far from Me, unless she herself turns back and avoids Me. If she does this, she cannot return to her former place without humbling herself."

By these words Mechtilde understood that Jesus on the day of Profession takes each Religious into His fatherly arms, and does not in future leave him unless (which God forbid) he wilfully refuses to obey. This is, in a sense, to escape out of our Lord's hands. These hands will not receive him again unless, by true repentance and fitting satisfaction, he prostrates himself humbly before God, promising solemnly to obey in future.

Our Lord confirmed this doctrine by a vision. Mechtilde saw the soul of a deceased Religious, and, as she asked why it was not in heaven, our Lord replied: "He thought himself wiser than his Superior, of whose actions he disapproved, thinking he knew better. This caused him to be separated from Me after his death, for a Religious is never so wise but that he should submit himself humbly to his Superior, and bow to his authority in all that is good."

If Religious only understood their happiness! On their Profession day Jesus receives them into His arms, clasping them to His Sacred Heart; He will never let them go as long as their will submits to their Superiors. Happy the

Community composed of such subjects! Mechtilde once saw hers gathered round our Lord. From His Sacred Heart rays penetrated each soul, and our Lord extended His hand to fill each with His glory, saying: "Behold, I shower on you the gifts of My glorified humanity; preserve them by purity of heart, by loving union one with the other, and by true patience, and on the day of Judgment you will offer them joyfully to Me, in yourselves."

CHAPTER XXXI

THE RENEWAL OF OUR FIRST FERVOUR

"NEGLECT not the grace that is in thee." This recommendation of the Apostle to his disciple may be made to all Christians. They are invited to renew on the anniversary of their Baptism the grace they then received; but it may be made specially to souls consecrated to God. These ought to renew the grace of their vocation to the Religious Life at particular epochs.

Our sleeping evil nature wakes up as the serpent after the winter cold. We are disgusted with the fatigues and monotony of practising virtue. We may even get so absorbed in the exercise of charitable works, as to forget the principal end to be aimed at and the programme of perfection from which we must never deviate. In this way, a Religious, after having begun well, soon shows sad signs of tepidity, if he has no zeal for the exercise of spiritual renovation, which in our time bears the name of the Monthly Retreat.

Our vocation has its source in the Sacred Heart, and it is also in that Sacred Heart that it must be renewed. The Religious of Helfta were faithful in making this renovation. St. Gertrude, as we shall see later on, had composed a series of exercises in order to help them. There was an exercise to renew the grace of Baptism, for that of the Clothing and Profession, for that of renewal in the love of God and zeal for His praise, and an exercise of Preparation for Death. In all these compositions the Sacred Heart is constantly studied.

When St. Mechtilde was one day reviewing her past years in bitterness of soul, thinking how carelessly she had

lived, how many gratuitous graces she had received from God, how her consecration to God as His spouse had been stained by her sins, our Lord said to her: "If thou hadst the choice, which wouldst thou prefer, to have acquired by thy own labour and virtues the gifts I have given thee, or to have received them gratuitously from Me?" She replied: "My Lord, I value the smallest gift Thou dost give me more than all the merits of the Saints, even if I could obtain them by the greatest labours and the practice of all the virtues." Our Lord answered: "Mayest thou be eternally blessed for saying that."

He added: "If thou wilt renew thy promises, draw near to My feet and give thanks for the garment of innocence with which I have gratuitously clothed thee, for thou hadst in no way merited it; beg that My immaculate purity may supply for all that is vitiated in thee. Give thanks for all the good works wrought by My hands, which are a source of merit for thee, and also for the works, operated in thee, by Me. Then plunge the divine ring of thy faith and love in the furnace of My Heart, as gold tried in the fire, wash the stone in the water and blood of My Heart, so that it may regain its value and brilliancy."

In these words Jesus conveys a lesson, but He also lets us get a glimpse of a delightful secret of His Heart. The lesson consists in teaching us again to steep our soul and all its powers in His sacred wounds, especially in the wound of His Sacred Heart, but the secret He lets us see ought to inspire us with a boundless confidence. This Sacred Heart will be ready to supply for all our infidelities to the graces we have received. If the capital He had confided to us has not yielded all the hoped-for interest, He will still give the reward promised to the faithful servant.

O Lord Jesus! we have so often spoilt Thy plans and frustrated Thy graces, how happy would we be if, like

Thy humble servant, we could say: " I value the smallest gift Thou dost give me more than all the merits of the Saints, if I could obtain them by the greatest labours and the practice of all the virtues."

At the same time the soul must examine herself and scrutinize the most intimate dispositions of her heart. Our Lord would Himself one day make this examination when Mechtilde heard these words read in the Gospel: " Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" He said to her: " I am going also to question thee: thou wilt reply with all sincerity. Is there anything in the world so dear to thee that thou wouldst not give it up, if possible, for My love?" She replied: " Thou knowest, Lord, that if all the world and all it contains belonged to me, I would give it all up for Thy love." Our Lord recorded this reply as though in reality she possessed all this and had given it up.

He then questioned her a second time: " Is there any labour, any burden that obedience could lay on thee that would seem to thee too heavy to be borne for My love?" She answered: " Lord, I am ready to suffer everything for Thy Name."

Our Lord said a third time: " Is there any crushing pain that thou wouldst refuse to bear for My love?" She answered: " My Lord, with Thee, and with Thy help, I am ready to endure every kind of pain."

The Lord judged the test sufficient and accepted the assurances as if they had been verified in fact. As to the dispositions of her heart, in her intercourse with God and men, our Lord condescended to tell Mechtilde what they should be, if they were to be pleasing to Him. A consecrated soul will do its utmost to obtain or to renew them in itself.

" The soul of a Religious," He said, " should conduct itself towards Me as a child who tenderly loves its Father and turns to him for all its wants. It must be like a

betrothed virgin, who has not been sought for her wealth or beauty or nobility, but who is cherished by pure love and chosen for the honour of occupying a throne. This virgin would naturally be more grateful, more faithful and more loving. If her spouse causes her pain, or she has something to bear through him, she will show more patience. In the same way My spouse must gratefully remember the choice I made of her before the foundation of the world, her ransom for which I paid the price of My Precious Blood, and her special vocation to My love and intimacy.

" She must also be to Me what one friend is to another, who can look upon what belongs to his friend as his own. She must seek the glory of God in all things and augment it as much as possible. She must never view with indifference anything that is done against God.

" When she communicates, she should be like a queen who goes to her king. A queen at the king's table is liberal; she distributes gifts and alms. My spouse should in the same way distribute liberally to all the gifts of her King and the help of her prayers.

" In the choir and during prayer she should be with Me as a young bride with her spouse, treating Me with love and sweet familiarity.

" Among men she should act towards Me as a little dog acts towards its master. No matter how often he is sent away, he continues to follow his master. In the same way, if My spouse hears among others some sinful words, she must return by contrition, confiding in My mercy, for I can forgive all for a single sigh."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SACRED HEART SHOULD BE THE ONLY TREASURE OF A RELIGIOUS

FAITHFUL soul, who lovest God, consider carefully and lovingly the commandment which Jesus has laid upon thee.

He has chosen thee as His spouse, and thou hast in Him a Spouse eternally young and full of beauty. Thy union, solicited by Him, has been consummated, thanks to His grace, on the day of thy solemn espousals, so full of joy to His Heart.

He arrayed Himself, for love of thee, in a purple robe which love had dyed with the blood of His Heart. He placed on His head a crown of lilies and roses, and the costly pearls of this crown were the drops of His Precious Blood. In place of gloves His Hands were stained with His blood; the nails had so pierced them that He could hold nothing, but allowed thee to have all that He had so long hidden, for the salvation of the world. His noble mystical couch was the hard Cross, which He ardently desired; no spouse ever found, on ivory couch covered with silks, such great happiness or joy. On this couch of His love, He still awaits thee, longing to enjoy thy embrace. And now, if thou wilt be His spouse, thou must renounce all pleasure, draw near to this couch of suffering and ignominy, and rest closely united with His wounded Heart.

Consider in silence what a precious pledge He has given thee in opening to thee this loving Heart; what sweet drink of love He has poured out to cure all the ills of thy soul. This noble pledge is indeed inestimable, for

all grace, all virtue and all goodness are contained therein, and the Spouse who makes it the pledge of His fidelity will never deprive thee of it. He acts as a king who has not yet brought his young bride to his palace; he places, as a pledge of his honour, a rich city in the hands of her friends. So the Spouse who loves thee has placed in the hands of the eternal Father this precious gift of His divine Heart. It is the token that He will never abandon thee His spouse; and each day He offers it again for thee on the altar in testimony of the love He has had for thee from all eternity.

Do thou, then, daughter of the eternal Father, chosen spouse of His only Son, friend of the Holy Spirit, who seeks in this Son His rest, love thy Beloved who has so loved thee and is all love. Be faithful to Him who is fidelity itself. When some pain comes to thee, accept it as a golden chain thrown to thee by God, to draw thee to the love of His Son. Allow thyself to follow this sweet attraction; raise thyself; rouse thy heart so that the attraction may be more powerful; make it easier by gratitude and patience, and never forget that God means to accomplish thy salvation by these means.

Think also of all the virtues you have yet to acquire. If you need humility or any other virtue, open with the key of love this precious treasury of all virtues, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Beg of Him, King of all virtues, to give you those with which He was Himself adorned, and you will triumph over all the assaults of vice. If the devil, sower of evil thoughts, surprises you, have recourse to the same treasury and take from it the choicest weapons. These weapons are the Passion and Death of our Lord; make the thought of them dwell in the inmost recesses of your heart; it will disperse and put to flight all evil thoughts. When sadness or despair assails you, have recourse to the treasure of His inexhaustible tenderness. It is the wish of the divine Heart that none should perish,

but that all should know and love the truth, excepting those who wilfully choose damnation. Remember that God is more eager to seek man than man is to find God. He desires above all things that man should always be disposed to receive His grace and to grow more and more in all virtues.

The Sacred Heart is entirely made known to us in these lines of St. Mechtilde. She shows it to us as the treasury of the divinity, containing all grace, all virtues, and every kind of good. We can open this Heart with the key of love, and we shall find therein every virtue we need, weapons against our foe, the certainty and pledge of its Love. Of itself, this Heart longs to bestow its gifts, and it is only anxious to prepare men to receive them. It has given itself as a pledge for us to the eternal Father, and it is always ready to pay our debts, to supply for our failings, and to turn away the punishment we deserve. If in the thirteenth century this Heart seemed a treasury reserved for holy souls, let us remember that since the seventeenth it has become the possession of all, especially of the most miserable. May all our efforts tend to make our souls capable of possessing it. *Et Cor Tuum, ut magis trahatur, habilita.*

CHAPTER XXXIII

A RELIGIOUS BELOVED BY THE SACRED HEART IS A TREASURE IN A COMMUNITY

ONE Sunday illness prevented Mechtilde from communicating. She was much grieved and said to our Lord: "My Lord, what wilt Thou now that I do?" He said: "Come" three times. She did not understand. "Come," He explained, "from heart to heart by love, from mouth to mouth by a kiss, from spirit to spirit by union."

She understood what was meant by "from heart to heart by love," and also the second expression "from mouth to mouth by a kiss"—that is, showing by exterior actions her love for the Man-God, but she asked herself what it meant to go to Him from spirit to spirit. Our Lord said to her: "He who renounces his own will in all that happens, whether it be pleasant or otherwise, and prefers My will to his own, comes to Me 'from spirit to spirit by union,' and that which is written shall be fulfilled in Him: 'He who loves God becomes one with Him.'"

She then began to pray that a misfortune then threatening the monastery might be averted by God's mercy. Our Lord said to her: "Thou art My joy and I am thine; as long as thou livest and art the joy of My Heart, no such misfortune shall happen to the monastery." She replied: "Oh, my Beloved! why dost Thou speak thus, since there is nothing of good in me?" He replied: "If vinegar and honey are mixed together the latter loses its sweetness, but Mine will never be so mixed as to disappear."

The following was added by St. Gertrude after

St. Mechtilde's death. "See, My Beloved, how powerful is the prayer of the just man, and what grace God bestows on man because of His friends; truly are Thy friends honoured, O my God; they can never be sufficiently loved and revered, who so often appease Thy wrath kindled against us and draw down on us Thy blessing. 'Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes' (Jer. ix. 1) worthily to weep for one who interceded for us through love, and whom we have lost? Because of her the Lord Almighty has often spared us; many times have we experienced the efficacy of her prayers! Inflamed by divine love as a glowing coal, she urged us to love God. Alas, where shall we find her equal, now that she has entered into the joy of her Lord? She has entered into the nuptial chamber of the Lord of all, to rest in the shadow of her Beloved."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SACRED HEART AND THE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL

OUR Lord, through St. Margaret Mary, promised that priests devout to the Sacred Heart should have the gift of converting souls. Such a promise is not found in the *Book of Special Grace*, but the part taken by the Sacred Heart in the preaching of the Gospel is to be found therein.

Mechtilde prayed for a Friar Preacher. Our Lord said to her: "I have chosen him for Myself, and he shall be Mine for all eternity. I will be his Guide and co-operate in all his labours. I will be his Protector, Consoler, and Procurator of the house in which he dwells. When he preaches may My Heart be in his mouth a sounding trumpet; when he teaches may My Heart be his book."

Preaching and teaching coming from the Sacred Heart must enlighten and transform souls. "I have left Myself to his will," said our Lord of another Friar Preacher. "I will never strike a sinner against his will, and to all those for whom he prays I will give the grace he begs. As a light feather carried away by the wind gets caught in the liquid balm, so his soul will be bound fast to My divine Heart."

How happy must be a priest who has such power, even over our Lord; a power to convert sinners and enrich the just with treasures of grace! And yet this extraordinary privilege is offered to every priest who is earnest in the worship and love of the Sacred Heart. "I will give priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts." May, therefore, the Sacred Heart be our Book! May the Sacred Heart be our speaking trumpet!

CHAPTER XXXV

THE SACRED HEART AND THOSE WHO SUFFER

SINCE original sin appeared in the world sorrow has become man's daily bread, but he has never been able to get used to such a hard fate. God has therefore treated him as mothers treat their little children. The Incarnate Word came to taste the bitterness of our sorrows, and He then offers them to us, sweetened by His grace and enriched by His merits. Then, also, the Sacred Heart is come to add by the charm of its tenderness to all the other motives for accepting suffering in a Christian spirit. Its condescension for those who weep is a mystery of love.

Adam's sin is the source of all our sorrows, and from the root of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil a river of tears sprang up which constantly inundates the earth. But as all possible sufferings met in Jesus at the time of the Passion, *dolores nostros ipse portavit*, so it is from His Sacred Heart that now they are distributed to His faithful disciples. Let us refer them to this divine Heart with the homage of our submission and gratitude.

"O Love! I offer them to Thee for the same intentions as Thou didst bring them to me from the Sacred Heart of God, and when they have been perfected, I pray Thee to return them there."

Such is the lesson our Lord deigned to give to His well-beloved spouse. She saw herself one day in a most beautiful mansion, and recognized that she was in the Heart of Christ. She prostrated herself on a large cross that lay on the ground. And from the cross sprang a sharp golden arrow which pierced her heart. She then

heard our Lord say: "All the goods of earth could not fill one soul with joy, but it is in suffering and sorrow that it will find salvation and glory." And our Lord added: "A silken garment is soft and pleasant, so every suffering is sweet to a soul that really loves God."

Mechtilde replied: "That is true in the beginning of pain when a soul is inflamed with love, but if the pain increases it becomes hard to bear." Our Lord answered: "No doubt; but if a silken garment is adorned with gold and precious stones it is not thrown away nor despised because of its weight; rather, on account of its adornment, is it considered more valuable and distinguished. And so a faithful soul will not refuse suffering because it is too painful; for by it the soul's virtues will become more perfect and its merits infinitely increased."

Who would not submit to pain offered in this way by the Sacred Heart? Mechtilde accepted the trial of sickness, signified by the cross and sharp golden arrow.

And why did our Lord once clasp Mechtilde with His left arm, so that she rested on the wound of His Sacred Heart? He tells us Himself: "When thou art ill I hold thee with My left arm, and when thou art well with My right arm; but remember that when thou art held by My left arm thou art much nearer My Heart."

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE SACRED HEART WISHES TO CONSOLE THOSE WHO SUFFER

THE first act of a soul that is in pain ought to be to throw itself into the Sacred Heart and offer to that Heart all its sorrow. Jesus will shower on the soul wonderful graces; He will receive its tears, uniting them with His own, thus giving them an infinite value. He will also confide such a soul to the love by which He was guided during the days of His mortal life, and this love will be more its servant than its master. He confided Mechtilde to this love one day, so that it might care for her and serve her during her illness.

Love serves the souls confided to its care in three ways: First it undertakes with great fidelity the matters confided to it. It also guards carefully in the casket of the divine Heart all committed to its care, and remits it faithfully increased and ennobled to the soul when it leaves this world. It also helps man in labours and troubles, assists in good and defends him in evil.

But our Lord, though He had given Mechtilde into the care of love, would console her Himself. One night when she could not sleep, on account of a violent pain in her head, she begged our Lord to tell her where she could find a little rest. Our Lord showed her the wounds in His hands and feet, and told her to choose in which she would rest. As she refused to make this choice herself, Jesus showed her the wound in His side and said to her: "You must enter here to rest." And at once she entered with joy into the divine Heart, and found sweet repose.

Though Mechtilde suffered violent pain she was filled with joy. "My soul," she says, "is full of divine sweetness and floats in the divinity as a fish in water or a bird in the air. Union between God and the Saints, and that between God and my soul have only this difference: they rejoice in the fulness of their joy, and I in suffering." The favours showered upon her during her severe illnesses astonished even the Saints in heaven.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE SACRED HEART AT ST. MECHTILDE'S DEATH

SUFFERING ends in death. Will the Sacred Heart which was with us in our tears remain with us in our agony, until our last sigh?

Yes; Jesus has promised all His devoted servants that He will be their support at that dread moment. He has deigned to give us a special pledge of this promise in the visible protection accorded to His Apostles in their last hour. All received the grace of a glorious death, not only before God, but also before men. They all prepared with the same care, with the same confidence in their Judge, and with the same peace in the last moments before their sacrifice. It was the same with St. Mechtilde.

This humble and devoted servant of Jesus Christ had spent over fifty-seven years of her life in the Religious state; at the end she suffered continual pain for about three years, which ended in death. About a month before this happened, she went, as was her custom, through the exercise of preparation for death, composed by St. Gertrude.

On the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost of the year 1298 she received Holy Communion for the last time. She then recommended her last hour to the mercy of God. Jesus, standing before her, said very tenderly: "Honour and joy of My divinity, delight and rest of My Spirit, wilt thou come now and remain for ever with Me, fulfilling My desire and thine?" She replied: "My Lord God, I desire Thy glory more than my happiness. I beg of Thee, therefore, to allow me to

expiate by suffering all that, as Thy creature, I have neglected in the praise I owed Thee."

Our Lord received this reply very graciously, and said: "As thou hast chosen this, it is another mark of likeness to Me, for I accepted and voluntarily suffered the anguish of the Cross and of death for the glory of God and the salvation of the world. And, as My sufferings penetrated and moved the Heart of My Father, so thy sufferings and death shall penetrate into My Heart and contribute to the salvation of the whole world."

Mechtilde's Sisters suffered at witnessing her terrible pain, and also at the thought of the approaching separation: "Weep not and do not be sad on my account, my well-beloved," she said to them. "I share in your sorrow, and if it were the will of our sweetest Spouse who loves us, I would live always in these pains and so always be able to console you."

What admirable dispositions! Like St. Martin, the humble Benedictine is ready to live, to suffer, to die; but she willed above all the holy will of God, and that adorable will had decreed the end of her exile. Our Blessed Lord warned her of it, saying with much tenderness: "Come, My elect, My dove, My flowering field, where I have found all I wished for, My garden full of beauty where I have tasted all the joys of My divine Heart; there flourish all virtues, there grow the trees of good works, there flow the waters of devotion and fervour; it was always open for Me to find what I wanted. I loved to retire to this garden when sinners irritated Me; in drinking of its waters I was so inebriated as to forget the insults offered Me."

On the evening of this Sunday Gertrude was praying for her friend, and received from our Lord the mission to warn her to prepare for Extreme Unction. She told her from Him that after the reception of this salutary Sacrament, our Lord, who watches with so much care

over His friends, would hide her in His pure and spotless Heart—in the same way, she added, as a painter takes great care of a picture newly painted, for fear it should be spoiled by the dust.

Mechtilde submitted, but without begging much for the precious Sacrament. On the Monday morning before dawn she was attacked suddenly with such violent pain that the priest was brought in great haste to give her Extreme Unction. During the ceremony Gertrude in ecstasy saw our Lord turn on Mechtilde a loving look, full of all the goodness and tenderness His divine Heart had had for her, when the priest anointed her eyes. It was as though a ray of divine light communicated to her all the merits of His most holy eyes. And the eyes of Mechtilde, under the influence of this divine goodness, seemed to distil an oil of infinite sweetness.

This mysterious fact made Gertrude understand that on account of Mechtilde's merits our Lord gave great consolation to those who invoked her with confidence; she had deserved this privilege, because during her life she had from motives of charity always shown herself kind and considerate to everyone. In the same way, when the Unction was applied to the other parts of her body, our Lord gave to each the perfect merits of the corresponding sense of His own body.

The dying servant of God spoke also very lovingly to the Holy Virgin our Mother, recommending to her the companions whom she was about to leave, begging of her for love of her to show them greater affection. The Immaculate Virgin deigned to show she granted this request by laying her delicate hands on those of Mechtilde.

During her lengthened agony, Mechtilde said no other words than: "Good Jesus! Good Jesus!" showing that she had in her heart Him whose name, amidst the bitter agony of death, came continually to her lips with so much

sweetness. And all there recommended themselves to her prayers, confiding to her their concerns and those of others they loved. Mechtilde could only reply, very faintly: "Willingly" or "Yes." In this way she proved with what affection she would intercede with our Lord to grant all their petitions.

The longed-for hour came at last. Stripped of all that was earthly, perfectly resigned to the Will of her Beloved, this loving spouse was to leave the prison of the flesh to enter the nuptial chamber of her royal Bridegroom.

It was the hour for the community to rise, and the Mother Superior was the first, with a few others, at Mechtilde's side, when quite suddenly her face changed and assumed a look of exquisite tenderness, coming from an interior feeling of great love. One would have thought that by her signs and happy looks, as she was now unable to do so in words, she was inviting her dearly-loved Sisters to congratulate her on the ineffable gifts our Lord had bestowed on her. Then the God of majesty, the God of pure delights, the only One who can satisfy the loving soul, enclosed His spouse in the light of the divinity, and penetrated her entirely with it. He, the Chanter of chanters, with the sweetest voice intoned a song which surpassed all earthly melodies. In this moment He repaid this soul, which like a nightingale had so often on the earth charmed His divine Heart, less by the sweetness of her voice than by the fervour of her devotion. He therefore sang to her these words: "Come, thou blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for thee. Arise, My love, and come without delay." He reminded her of the great grace granted her nine years previously, when He had given her His Heart as a pledge of His love and protection.

As soon as she had rendered her last sigh in the Heart of her Beloved, Gertrude saw her in glory, resting, full of joy, on the breast of Jesus. The Angels and Saints

came to salute her, less as an equal than as a queen. St. Gertrude begged her to pray that the defects of those on earth for whom she had always shown so much affection might be cured. Mechtilde replied: "I see very clearly in the light of truth, that all the affection I have ever felt for anyone on earth is smaller than a drop of water is to the ocean, compared with the tender affection which fills the divine Heart towards those I loved. I also see, in a manner incomprehensible to you, how good are the designs of Providence: in that God leaves man certain defects which give him cause for humbling himself and for making efforts, so making each day progress in the way of salvation. And so I could not have the thought of any will other than that of the almighty wisdom and tender goodness of my sweet and loving Lord, in which He has desired for each one according to His good pleasure. All I can do, in considering the admirable ways of the divine goodness, is to spend myself in praise and thanksgiving."

This reply was for St. Gertrude a consolation and encouragement. A consolation: she was immeasurably loved by the Sacred Heart. An encouragement: she must bear her defects and combat lovingly to the end.

The day following at the first Mass, which was a Requiem Mass, the elect of God appeared to her; she seemed drawing from the Heart of our Lord with golden tubes. In this way those who had a special devotion to her drew from the divine Heart all they desired. They seemed to be saying these or similar words: "By the love which made Thee grant so many favours to Thy beloved Mechtilde, or to any other Saint, and by Thy will to grant grace to whomsoever it may be on earth or in heaven; hear me, sweet Lord Jesus Christ, by her merits and those of Thy elect."

During the Mass which followed that of the burial, Mechtilde appeared as one settled in the divine Heart,

using this Heart as a lyre of which she touched four strings, making a delicious melody in several parts, melody of praise, thanksgiving, loving complaint and prayer.

The last vision with which St. Gertrude was favoured about her holy friend resumed all her teaching: zeal for the divine praise and love for the Sacred Heart. Mechtilde always appeared to be resting in the Heart of Christ, and she left it to come and meet Gertrude, showing herself to be in the brightness of glory, clothed with a dazzling garment that seemed covered with diamonds, some shining like stars and others clear as a mirror. Gertrude asked what more she desired from her Order. "Above all," she said, "I desire the praise of my Lord. You could do nothing that would give me greater happiness than to praise Him unceasingly. He has placed me among His Saints who please Him most by praising Him best."

Gertrude replied: "How are we to praise God in you?" Mechtilde replied: "Perform all your actions with the same purity of intention and perfect love that I always had for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Do this when you enter the choir to pray or to sing. Do the same when you go to sleep or take your meals, and the same for everything else. Do all your actions for me, to the praise of my Beloved, and in that you will find your salvation."

Gertrude continued: "What do you gain for the praises we offer to God for you?" She replied: "A special embrace which renews all my joy and happiness." And Gertrude saw three rays of light which came from the divine Heart and illuminated Mechtilde and all the Saints. These turning to our Lord sang: "We praise Thee for the everlasting beauty of Thy spouse, for the delight Thou takest in her, and for the perfect union which makes her one with Thee."

Gertrude, seeing that our Lord took pleasure in these

praises, said to Him: "Why, O Lord, dost Thou take so great a pleasure in being praised in this soul?" He answered: "Because while living she desired above all things to see Me praised. She has kept this desire, and I come to satisfy her with My ceaseless praise (*et hanc incessabili laude mea cupio satiare*)."

On the feast of St. Catherine, Mechtilde came to the choir with our Lord, as if to direct the singing according to custom. And as St. Gertrude was astonished and said to her: "Is there anything you would like to ask of your sisters?" she replied: "Rejoice ardently together in your Beloved; His love surrounds you with as much tenderness and affection as that of a mother with her only child. She would always wish it to be resting on her breast. He also protects you against all that might prove harmful. God, who loves you so much, wishes you always to remain attached to Him, and never to forsake Him. If you leave Him, He will send sorrows so that you may return to Him; so does a faithful mother act. She chastises her child if it leave her and fall, to teach it not to leave her. In the same way a mother finds great joy in the tender, loving words of her child, so does your Spouse desire of you. Therefore give Him your hearts, since He is Father, Lord and Spouse and Friend and all in all to you."

The last words Gertrude understood by a divine inspiration; since He is our Father, we ought to go to Him for all we need; since He is our Lord, we must place in Him all our hope; since He is our Spouse, we must love Him with all our heart and soul; and since He is our Friend, we must tell Him with great confidence all our pains and necessities and look for consolation from Him only.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE SACRED HEART AND PURGATORY

THE Sacred Heart does not abandon the souls that have during their lives been devout to it, even amidst the flames of purgatory. He Himself begs for suffrages and prayers for them. In the resurrection of Lazarus He rewarded the faith and confidence of the two sisters. With what delicate skill did our Lord lead Martha and Mary to believe in His power and goodness. And when they said: "I have believed that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world," He went at once and called Lazarus from corruption: "Lazarus, come forth."

Mechtilde fulfilled this rôle during her lifetime. The soul of a Brother had been recommended to her prayers. She did not trouble to remember him. She received a direct inspiration from heaven, and yet did not obey. Our Lord spoke severely to her: "So thou wilt not allow Me to satisfy for My friend by thee." Then taking her by the hand, He said: "Come, and I will introduce thee into the admirable tabernacle of My house." She was ravished into heaven, and there the soul of this brother appeared to her, standing before our Lord, adorned by five rays which came from the divine Heart.

The first ray entered his eyes. It signified the knowledge which had adorned his life, and which led him ceaselessly to contemplate God in the glory of the divinity. The second ray entered his ears. It signified the joy with which he received the words and tender greetings which were ceaselessly spoken to him by God. The third ray entered his mouth, to signify the ineffable praise of God

which never ceased coming from his mouth. The fourth ray filled his heart. It signified the marvellous sweetness, joy and delight with which heavenly favours filled him. The fifth ray inundated and illuminated his body with ineffable brightness, showing that in all his members and with all his strength he had been devoted to good works and to the practice of virtue.

Then Mechtilde, filled with admiration, said to our Lord: "My sweetest Lord, why hast Thou taken this soul so soon out of the world, where his words and example might have done good to so many?" Our Lord replied: "His ardent desire constrained Me. As a child separated from his mother's breast, he was drawn to Me; so he deserved to come so soon and rest in Me. He had worked so hard and would receive so great glory that his admission had to be a little delayed. During this time I made him rest on My Heart." She asked: "O loving Lord, how long did he rest thus?" "Just one morning," answered our Lord, "during which love accomplished in him what it had designed for him from all eternity."

How consoling! Purgatory might be passed in the Heart of Jesus if only we were as much attached to Him as a child to its mother's breast. From the Sacred Heart come the rays that purify souls and prepare them for the glory of heaven. From the Sacred Heart come the inspirations to help the faithful departed. But all souls do not spend their purgatory on the breast of Jesus.

Mechtilde was allowed one day to witness the torments by which some unhappy souls were purified, each suffering according to the faults it had committed. But the greatest suffering was the privation of the sight of God. "Do you suffer pain?" she inquired of a young man recently deceased. "No," he replied, "except that I do not yet see my loving Lord. So great is my desire to do so that the united desires of all men would seem nothing in comparison."

The want of God is therefore the greatest torment of these souls. So Mechtilde made every effort to enable them to enter into the presence of this God so ardently longed for. It had been said to her: "The prayer of a pure soul, offered to God with love, flows into the divine Heart as very limpid water, and is very efficacious."

Our Lord said to her one day after Holy Communion: "Say the *Our Father* for the dead in union with the intention My heart had in teaching it to men." By these words she was enlightened to know that the *Pater* ought to be recited with the following intentions: At the first words, *Pater noster qui es in cœlis*, we ought to ask pardon for souls who have committed faults against a Father so adorable and loving, who by pure goodness has raised men to the great honour of being the sons of God—(1) in not loving Him with sufficient respect; (2) in not giving Him the honour due to Him; (3) in driving Him from their hearts where He wishes to reign as in heaven. Christians then pray in union with their innocent Brother, Jesus Christ, who offered for these souls His penances, full of love and satisfaction. Through Him the Father receives in reparation for these sins the love of His Heart offered in His human nature with so great honour and reverence.

Sanctificetur nomen tuum, "Hallowed be Thy Name," to repair and supply—(1) what was wanting in their reverence for the Name of God and so great a Father; (2) the fault of having taken this Name in vain, or of having thought so seldom of it; (3) the fault of having shown themselves by their evil lives unworthy of this holy Name, though they are called Christians. The heavenly Father is then begged to accept the perfect sanctity of His Son, who magnified His holy Name in His preaching and glorified Him in all the works of His holy humanity.

Adveniat regnum tuum—"Thy kingdom come." Here

forgiveness is asked for souls—(1) who have never desired enough the kingdom of God or God Himself, in whom alone is true rest and eternal joy; (2) for those who have never sought it diligently. The heavenly Father is petitioned to receive the very holy desires of His loving Son to have them for heirs to His kingdom in reparation for the coldness these souls have shown for all that is good.

Fiat voluntas tua sicut in cœlo et in terra, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We should say these words to repair their faults—(1) of not having preferred God's will to their own; (2) for not having loved it in all things. We must beg our heavenly Father to accept, in reparation for their disobedience, the union of the very holy Heart of His Son with His very perfect obedience, for He became obedient unto death. Mechtilde understood from these words, "Thy will be done," that religious persons often sinned—(1) in very rarely offering to God their whole will; (2) in often drawing it back, and that it was very necessary, at these words, to make mention of them, as many were kept separated from God after death through this negligence.

Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie—"Give us this day our daily bread." The faults to be repaired are—(1) not having received with sufficient desire, devotion, and love the Blessed Sacrament, so great and so necessary for them; (2) that many have rendered themselves unworthy to receive it; (3) that some have rarely or never received it. We should beg our heavenly Father to regard the ardent love, ineffable desires, perfect sanctity and devotedness with which Jesus Christ gave us this magnificent and perfect gift.

Et dimitte nobis debita nostra—"And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." At these words we should ask forgiveness—(1) for all sins committed, mortal sins and those caused by them; (2) for the many who have been unwilling to forgive offences

committed against themselves; (3) for those who have not loved their enemies. We ought to beg Almighty God in reparation for these faults to accept the prayer, full of charity, with which His Son prayed for His enemies.

Et ne nos inducas in tentationem—"And lead us not into temptation." The real evil for these souls is that they did not resist their vices and concupiscences, but were so often led by the devil and their own evil inclinations, throwing themselves wilfully into all kinds of evil. We pray our heavenly Father to accept in atonement and reparation for these faults the glorious victory won by Christ over the devil and the world during His most holy life, in His labours and different sufferings. We finish by supplicating Him to deliver them from all evils, and conduct them to the kingdom of glory, which is Himself. Amen.

When Mechtilde had finished this prayer she saw an immense number of souls, full of joy, giving thanks for their deliverance. This was no doubt owing to the merits and fervour of the holy spouse of the Sacred Heart; but even of itself this prayer is most efficacious, for by it we offer the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart. It is our duty to pray often to God, through the divine Heart, on behalf of the souls kept by the justice of God in the expiatory flames.

On All Souls' Day our Lord appeared to Mechtilde in all the brightness of His beauty, bearing three precious jewels on His breast. The first signified the eternal desire with which God is always filled for souls. The second, the insatiable love of His divine Heart for man, for even though man remain cold and insensible, the love of the divine Heart is unchangeable, and burns for him. The third jewel signified the joys of the divine Heart of which the Scripture speaks: "My delights are to be with the children of men."

He then allowed her to see the souls of the dead on this

day consecrated to their remembrance. Approaching, He deigned to serve them Himself. Every word said in choir, in the lessons, all that the whole Church does for these souls seemed different kinds of food and drink which He gave them Himself. The souls were filled with great joy, but in their hearts there was a cruel executioner, the sting of conscience. *Hic erat propria conscientia.*

And this worm tore and tormented them ceaselessly. This worm never dies in purgatory, and the soul is only liberated from it when it enters into the joy of its Lord and is united to God eternally. Then the soul hears this loving invitation: "From the depths of My Heart drink joy, and that because of those who pray for thee" (*Bibe de medulla Cordis mei gaudium ex parte omnium pro te orantium*). May we induce Jesus to say these sweet words to our dear dead, and may we hear them ourselves very soon after our last sigh.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SACRED HEART AND HEAVEN

WHEN the soul of the just leaves the body, if it is so entirely exempt from all sin that it may at once enter heaven, God penetrates this happy soul with His divine Spirit, fills and possesses all its senses to such a point that He is the eye by which the soul sees, the light through which it sees, and the beauty which it perceives. So, in a manner as inexpressible as delightful, God, in the soul, and with the soul, contemplates Himself, the soul and all the Saints.

He is also the hearing of the soul, to listen to the sweet words which He speaks with more than motherly love, to hear also the harmony of God with all the Saints. Through Him the soul also breathes the life-giving and divine breath coming from God, the sweetness of which surpasses all perfumes and vivifies the soul for eternity. He is also the taste of the soul and causes it to relish His sweet savour. God is also the tongue and voice of the soul, with which He celebrates, in the soul and for the soul, His praises in the most complete and elevated manner possible. He is the heart of the soul, charming and rejoicing it, Himself revelling in it and with it and filling it with ravishing delight. Furthermore, God is the life of the soul and the motive-power of all its parts, so that all its acts seem done by God, and in the Saints St. Paul's words are fulfilled: "That God may be all in all" (2 Cor. xv. 28).

Has the intimate union of God with His elect ever been better expressed? We have already seen how Mechtilde, at the moment of her death, was admitted to a mysterious

union with the Sacred Heart. If this privilege is not granted to all the Saints, it is at least granted to those who have loved the Sacred Heart. When Mechtilde's Sister, the Abbess Gertrude, died she took her flight into the marvellous and divine Sanctuary of the Heart of Jesus opened to her with such joy and fidelity. What she saw, what she heard, what she felt, what she received of blessedness, from the overflowing tenderness of Jesus, in being transported by a special privilege to such a resting-place, who among men could imagine?

With what exquisite tenderness does her Eternal Spouse draw her to Himself! The daughters of the happy Abbess on earth joined in her bliss by singing *Quæ pausas sub umbra Dilecti*—"Thou who dost rest under the shadow of thy Beloved." And they could hear her reply: "It is not enough for me to rest in His shadow, it is in the very Heart of my Beloved that I rest lovingly, sweetly, and securely." "Then," said they, "speak for us all to God, since you are so full of bliss." "I beg for my daughters, that they too may enjoy the rest full of sweetness which I so securely enjoy in the dear Heart of our loving Jesus."

Behold, therefore, a soul in heaven who declares that it is not enough for her to rest in our Divine Lord's shadow! She must be hidden in His Heart. May infinite thanks be rendered for ever to our dear Saviour for having satisfied this ardent desire. He has willed to prepare for His elect a dwelling in the depths of His paternal Heart. There, throughout all eternity, they will see how they have been loved and gratuitously chosen for so great a happiness. Here below no one can open the heart of his friend and see there the feelings he entertains for him; but the elect enter into the most intimate secrets of the Sacred Heart; they see and taste, with ineffable joy, the fulness and charm of infinite love.

CHAPTER XL

OUR DUTY TOWARDS THE SACRED HEART: DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

IN her conversations with her two friends Mechtilde spoke from the fulness of her heart, but she had never dreamed of writing a book. Therefore a methodical manner of writing need not be expected in her teaching, such as one would desire in a treatise on the Sacred Heart.

What one can appreciate in the *Book of Special Grace* is the depth and elevation of the doctrine taught, the manifestation of the feelings which filled the Sacred Heart during the different epochs of its life, the account of its dealings with the Father and with each one of us in the exercise of its mediatorial office. In no other place are these admirable secrets recounted with so much exactness and magnificence. Even St. Gertrude never described the Sacred Heart of Jesus during His mortal life as St. Mechtilde has done. Saint Margaret Mary depicted it on one occasion only—*i.e.*, in the Agony in the garden at Gethsemani.

The knowledge of the Sacred Heart is a great grace, but it would be useless and even become a motive of condemnation, if it did not produce the desired fruit, that of the love and entire gift of our heart. To know without wishing to love is to approach hell; to know, and to strive to love, is to approach heaven.

Mechtilde was very near the abode of the Blessed, for she loved the Sacred Heart with a love her companions called excessive (*nimia*). No doubt our Blessed Lord constantly fed the flame of divine love in her heart, for

each time He appeared He opened His Heart and gave her some special grace. And, after all, had she not within her the furnace of divine love? The Sacred Heart had given itself to her, and she carried it always in her own heart.

The holy Benedictine may therefore be our model in a true devotion to the Sacred Heart. But does the *Book of Special Grace*, which reveals to us the prerogatives of the divine Heart, betray also the secrets of Mechtilde's intercourse with it? Are the acts of devotion practised in the thirteenth century in any way the same as those taught by St. Margaret Mary? Are the marks of devotion of the Virgin of Helfta the same as those of the Virgin of Paray-le-Monial?

We must acknowledge that St. Mechtilde's book is a real treasure, and Providence has amply justified the second title given to it by our Lord, who called it *The Light of the Church*. In reality it exacts from the soul devoted to the Sacred Heart all the acts of the modern devotion: adoration, return of love, outpouring of heart, gratitude, boundless confidence, even reparation for the outrages of which it is the victim.

The devotion taught by St. Mechtilde to her two companions has also another characteristic, that of absorbing all religion and the whole life. She did not find it enough to kiss the Sacred Heart five times a day, as she had been taught; she would also offer to it all her actions, seek in it all her supernatural intentions and through it praise the divine majesty of God. She sought it in the Sacraments, in the holy tribunal of penance, at the Holy Mass, and above all in Holy Communion. She was entirely absorbed in the Sacred Heart. She no longer lived, the Sacred Heart lived in her. May we, like her, be absorbed and transformed by this Heart so loving.

CHAPTER XLI

THE ADORATION OF THE SACRED HEART

TO praise, adore and glorify the Sacred Heart is an imperative need to a soul who knows its infinite perfections. Her inability to acquit herself of her duty worthily becomes an unspeakable torment.

" If I could," says St. Mechtilde to our Lord, " I would bend all knees before Thee, my sweet and faithful Friend in heaven, on earth and in hell."

Our Lord replied with His usual goodness: " Ask Me to accomplish this wish Myself, for in Me are all creatures; and when I come before My Father to fulfil the office of praise and thanksgiving, I am bound to supply perfectly for Myself and in Myself all that is wanting in creatures. My goodness could not suffer that the desire of any faithful soul, which it could not itself accomplish, should remain unsatisfied."

What a consolation for a soul burning with zeal for the Sacred Heart! The Heart of Jesus accomplishes itself the soul's desires and supplies for its powerlessness. And that is not all. One day when Mechtilde went to honour her Well-beloved with great love He said to her: " When thou dost salute Me, I salute thee in My turn; when thou dost praise Me, I praise Myself in thee; and when thou givest thanks, I also, in thee and by thee, return thanks to God the Father." She then said: " My Well-beloved, with what salutation dost Thou address my soul? I do not perceive it." He replied: " My salutation is no other than My great love for the soul. A mother caresses her child on her knee, teaching him to repeat the words he must use in saluting and speaking to her. Even if the child does not do this of himself, but only because his mother has taught him,

she receives with a mother's heart what he says, and sometimes rewards him with her embrace. I also teach the soul by My inspirations and love to salute Me. When it does what it can in its small way, I accept that according to the greatness of My paternal affection, returning to the soul its salutation and giving it My grace, without, however, this being perceived by the soul."

So when we would glorify the Sacred Heart it glorifies itself in us; and it does not value the praise from our lips for what it is worth, but for the immense love Jesus bears us and for what He adds thereunto Himself.

St. Mechtilde was enabled to understand this delightful mystery. She saw one day a wonderful harmonious instrument coming out of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She then leaned on the breast of her Well-beloved, using all her strength to praise Him in Himself and through Himself. The more she praised Him thus united to Him, the more her strength failed her, and that to annihilation. As wax melted before the fire, she felt melted and merged in God in a blissful union, close and inseparable. In that moment how she longed that all in heaven and on earth should together participate in the grace of God!

If we ask the Sacred Heart with what we are to praise it, Jesus answers, with all He has poured of praise into the Heart of His Father, with all He has poured of love into the Heart of His Mother, and with all He exhibited of heroism on the Cross.

One Holy Saturday when she would embalm with her adoration the body of her Beloved, He said to her: "Take the ineffable sweetness which eternally has flowed from My divine Heart into the Father and the Holy Spirit, take the sweetness which filled more than any other heart the virginal heart of My Mother; take the devotedness which, before My Passion, urged Me with the greatest desire and most ardent love. With these perfumes thou mayest embalm Me worthily."

CHAPTER XLII

THE OFFERING OF OUR HEARTS

I.—How our Lord wants us to give Him our Hearts.

PRÆBE, fili mi, cor tuum mihi—" My child, give Me thy heart." This is all the Sacred Heart of Jesus asks from men in return for His love, His sufferings and His grace.

Our Lord gives us His divine Heart in order to receive from us the gift of our hearts. If we give them with joy and confidence, God will guard them so powerfully that we shall not fall into grievous sin. We should therefore strive to increase our knowledge of the Heart of Jesus, and seek to please Him more. In sadnesss we should take refuge with confidence near this treasure which is bestowed on us, and seek therein our consolation.

The offering of our heart to Jesus is therefore a pledge of perseverance, but it is also in itself one of the greatest joys to His Sacred Heart. As the eagle always seeks in its prey the choicest morsel, the heart, so our Lord always seeks the heart, asking us to give Him this choice morsel.

Mechtilde, understanding this desire, could only exclaim: " O most loving Lord, with what burning desire would I wish to offer Thee my heart!"

And Jesus at once taking Mechtilde's heart into His hands inhaled the odour as of a sweet-scented rose. And she said: " What scent can you find in that which contains no good?" and our Lord replied: " Being Myself in thy soul, it is My sweetness which is breathed forth from thee. I am the Creator of the whole world, and have no need of any reward, but thou art thyself My reward, for My

heavenly Father has given thee to Me as My spouse and daughter."

Mechtilde then said: "Why, O loving Lord, dost Thou deal so with me who have nothing of good in me?"

He replied: "Solely because, through my goodness, I have placed in thee the delight of My Heart."

II.—How we should offer our Hearts to Jesus.

It was Pentecost Sunday and they sang at the offertory *Tibi offerent reges munera*—"Kings shall offer Thee their gifts," and Mechtilde said to our Lord: "What shall I offer to Thee, now, O well-beloved of my heart, for I have nothing worthy of Thee? Worldly people give Thee of their goods: Religious offer themselves, devoting themselves entirely." Our Lord answered: "Offer thy heart in five different ways, and it will be to Me a very agreeable offering. In the first place, offer it as the pledge of espousals, with all the fidelity of which it is capable, and beg of Me by the love of My Heart to purify it from all the stains of its unfaithfulness. Offer it also as a jewel, and make this offering as joyfully as if thou didst enjoy all happiness and didst renounce it for Me. Offer it also as a crown, adding to it all the honour thou mayst acquire in this world and even in the next, so as to have Me only for thy glory and crown. Offer it as a golden cup, out of which I may drink My own sweetness, and lastly offer it as a dish, on which exquisite food is served for Me to feed upon Myself.

"This offering ought to be frequently renewed. The Sacred Heart expects it at least daily. On rising in the morning give Me thy heart, so that I may pour My love into it."

And the Sacred Heart appeared to her open and as large as the palms of her two hands, like a burning flame.

Then our Lord said to her: "It is so I would wish to see the hearts of all men, burning with the fire of love."

And the Sacred Heart does not leave us alone amidst the turmoil of the world and business. It follows us. "Thou canst never find thyself surrounded by so great a crowd that thou art not alone with Me, if only thou turn thyself to Me with all thy heart."

Let us now listen to the Virgin of Helfta explaining this lesson of the perpetual life of love, or union with the Sacred Heart of our Lord: "When a man is alone let him continually raise his heart to God, speaking tenderly to Him, and, with frequent sighs, desiring ardently to possess Him. By this continual conversation with God his heart will be inflamed with divine love. If he is with others, let him turn his thoughts to God as much as he can; let him speak willingly of God to them, and so he will enkindle in them the fire of divine love. In the same way let him do all his actions for God and for His glory, and what he should not or cannot do, let him abstain from, also for the love of God. As to troubles or contradictions, let him accept them generously for the love of God and bear them patiently.

But if the loving soul gives itself to the Sacred Heart, will not the Sacred Heart give itself to him? Mechtilde wished to know the answer to this question. "Lord," she said, "when I pray or chant the psalms, what dost Thou do?" "I listen, but when thou dost sing I unite My voice to thine; when thou dost labour I take My repose, and the more thou dost labour with zeal and solicitude, the more sweetly I rest in thee. When thou dost eat I labour, and then I nourish Myself of thee and thou of Me; and when thou sleepest I watch and guard."

CHAPTER XLIII

THE OUTPOURINGS OF THE HEART

"GOD," says the prophet, "is a jealous God." Even so is the Heart of the Son of God made man. He wants our hearts entirely for Himself alone. On this condition alone will He give us His choice graces. The lover of souls, our Lord Jesus Christ, desires with a great desire to draw the soul to Himself, particularly if it longs to be consoled by Him and to participate in His graces to such a degree as to be willing to reject all consolation from creatures and all joy that does not draw or urge it on in the love of God. Whatever a man loves, or whatever he may have received, he owes all to God, who wishes thereby to draw man to love Him alone. If, therefore, the soul feels it is making no progress in the love of God, that the thought of some loved object returns more frequently to the mind than the thought of God, let it turn its thoughts away from that object, if it does not wish to be deprived of God's loving friendship. This friendship is excessively delicate and cannot bear anything to be considered above it, nor even on a level with it. Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of paternal charity, desires to be the Well-beloved of our hearts. This love without alloy and without division is the greatest of the joys of the Sacred Heart, exceeding the joy it receives from our praise and thanksgiving.

The Virgin, who personified love to Mechtilde, took her to our Lord. She, leaning on the wound of the Sacred Heart of our Saviour, which was her all, drew from it long draughts of mildness and kindness, which changed all her bitterness into sweetness and her fear into security. She took also from the sweet Heart of

Christ the continual praise which proceeds from the Sacred Heart: for all God's praise comes from this Heart, which is the pure source from which all good flows. She took also a second fruit, which was that of thanksgiving, for, in reality, the soul can do nothing of itself if God does not prevent it with His grace.

Our Lord then said to her: "I expect from thee, more than from all others, that thou shouldst give me a fruit." She replied: "And what is this fruit, dear Lord?" "It is that thou shouldst refer all that delights thy heart to Me only." "O my only Well-beloved, how shall I do this?" "My love will accomplish it in thee." Then in a transport of gratitude she cried out: "Oh yes, yes, love, love, love!"

Our Lord added: "My love shall be thy mother, and as children draw milk from their mother's breast, so thou shalt drink from the breast of this mother interior consolation and unutterable sweetness, and this mother shall nourish thee, quench thy thirst, clothe thee and provide for all thy necessities, as a mother would do for her only daughter."

While praying, with a heart full of fervour, desiring the Well-beloved of her soul, she suddenly felt herself powerfully drawn by divine grace; she seemed to see herself sitting at our Saviour's side. And our Lord clasping her soul to His Sacred Heart filled it with His grace. It seemed to her that it flowed into all her members. Love said to her soul: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." And at these words she entered into an ecstasy. As a drop of water in wine cannot be distinguished from the wine, so this blessed soul, lost in God, became one spirit with Him. In this union her soul annihilated itself, but God consoled it, saying: "I will shower all my gifts down on thee; rest here, leaning on the Heart of Him who loves thee."

Happy a thousand times the souls who find their rest

on the Sacred Heart of Jesus! And shall we poor sinners be for ever deprived of this happiness? Let us ask our Blessed Lady how we may make ourselves worthy and so testify our love for her beloved Son.

Mechtilde asked the Mother of God one day to obtain for her the grace to be cleansed from all her sins in the living waters of the divine Heart. Immediately the Blessed Virgin took her into her arms and led her to the divine Heart; her soul embraced the Heart of Jesus five times.

At the first embrace, she felt herself purified from all her stains. At the second, she felt that the true peace of our Lord was given her. At the third, she received the gift of a special sweetness as to a most dear friend. At the fourth, she was transported into the divine Heart, where she saw and recognized all the elect and all creatures. And our Lord said: "What wilt thou or canst thou desire more? Now all that constitutes the joy of heaven is thine." At the fifth, it seemed to her that she was sitting with our Lord at a table sumptuously served and that she was eating with Him.

So we see a soul that is drawn to the Heart of Jesus by love to give proofs of its affection finds itself overwhelmed by numberless favours. It came bringing the offering of its love, and it carries away with it the treasures of the Sacred Heart. Continue, O Jesus, to treat us as a mother treats her child. For if Thou dost seek in our hearts for the generosity of the Saints, steeped in Thy love, Thou wilt never be able to open Thy Heart to all the children of Adam.

CHAPTER XLIV

REPARATION FOR SIN

THE Sacred Heart was particularly honoured in the Monastery of Helfta by a return of love, the imitation of its virtues, by perfect praise and by thanksgiving. Reparation was not, however, unknown, and the inmates strove to repair the insults offered to it. At the time of the Carnival Mechtilde macerated her flesh till the blood flowed, offering this slight reparation to her Well-beloved for all the excesses and wickedness of the world. And our Lord, several times, said He loved to rest on Mechtilde's heart, where He could forget the pain caused Him by other hearts. It was the Sacred Heart just as Margaret Mary was to know it.

One day our Lord appeared to Mechtilde as though suspended, with hands and feet tied, and said to her: "Every time a man sins mortally he ties Me thus, and as long as he perseveres in his sin he keeps Me in this torture."

He had already complained of being so ill-treated in His Church. Three things particularly grieved Him: the clergy did not study the Holy Scriptures in the right way, but made it contribute to their vanity; Religious neglected interior things and gave all their attention to things exterior; the people took no care to hear the word of God nor to receive the Sacraments of Holy Church.

Mechtilde asked our Lord to teach her how she could offer satisfaction to Him for the many members of the Church who at this time (it was Quinquagesima Sunday) showered so many insults on Him. Our Lord replied: "Say 350 times the anthem: *Tibi laus, tibi gloria, tibi gratiarum actio, O beata Trinitas*!—'To thee be praise,

to thee glory, to thee thanksgiving, O blessed Trinity,' in reparation for all the indignities offered Me by those who are My members."

We see, therefore, that already Mechtilde was intent on offering reparation for the sins of others. But, above all others, she thought of her own sins. One day when she was grieving over the uselessness of her past life, she offered herself to live if possible in ceaseless sorrow and to suffer on earth to the uttermost.

Our Lord said to her: "To repair thy omissions and make up for the past, praise My Heart for its divine goodness. It is the source and origin of all good, and every blessing flows from it. Then praise My Heart for the numberless graces which have flowed, flow now, and shall for ever flow, on all the Saints and on all the souls that shall be saved. Afterwards praise My Heart for all the sweetness which, so many times, has sprung from My loving Heart and flowed into thine, intoxicating it with heavenly delight."

Once, on Good Friday, at the time when she was going to kiss the Cross, by a divine inspiration she said: "Behold, Lord, all my desires. I attach them to Thy Cross, and I submit them all to Thy desires, so that, completely purified and perfectly sanctified by this union, they may never incline again to earthly things."

At the wound of the right hand our Lord said to her: "Hide here thy spiritual treasures, so that all the negligences thou hast committed while wearing the religious habit may be fully repaired by My riches."

At the left hand He said: "Place here all thy sorrows and pains; united to My sufferings they will be sweet and exhale an agreeable odour before God; as a garment impregnated with musk or any other scent, spreading abroad a sweet perfume, or as a piece of bread dipped in honey tasting of sweetness."

At the wound in His Heart He said: "This wound is so

large that it embraces heaven and earth and all they contain; come, place thy love near to My divine love, that it may be perfected and so blended with it as to become one only love, as iron is identified with the fire."

The servant of God prayed for a person who had complained to her of the sorrow she felt because she did not love God enough and did not serve Him with enough devotion. She was herself also filled with sorrow at the thought, feeling herself in every way useless, having received such great blessings from God and yet loving Him so poorly. Our Lord answered her: "Come, My well-beloved, be not sad; all that is Mine is also thine." "If, therefore," said Mechtilde, "all that is Thine is mine, I possess also Thy love, for Thou hast said Thyself by St. John, 'God is love' (John iv. 16). I offer Thee, then, this love, that it may supply for all that is wanting in me."

Our Lord accepted this offering with pleasure, and said to her: "Thou must always do this; when thou dost desire to praise or to love Me without being able always to fulfil thy desire, thou shalt say: 'Good Jesus, I praise Thee; supply, I beg of Thee, all that is wanting to me.' If thou desirest to love thou shalt say: 'Good Jesus, I love Thee; in order to supply what is wanting to my love, I beg of Thee to offer to Thy Father for me the love of Thy Heart.' Also tell the person for whom thou hast prayed to do the same. If she does it a thousand times a day, her offering shall each time be presented to the Father, for it could never tire or weary Me."

What a magnificent occupation for the Sacred Heart to offer itself to the Father every time that we wish it in order to supply for our defective praise and love! Thus does it heal a delicate wound in a loving heart, zealous for God's glory.

"I am come with all My divine power," Jesus said to her one day, "to heal the wounds which cause you pain."

Mechtilde said, within herself: "Oh, if He would offer for Me an act of full and complete praise to God the Father, how happy I should be."

Answering her thought our Lord said: "In what does the praise of God consist, if not in a lamentation of the soul that it can never praise Him as it desires? And the desires, devotion, prayer and good will that a soul has to do good, all this is a sorrowful lamentation, and when I come to supply for it Myself, I heal it of all its wounds."

But this was not enough for Mechtilde. It did not suffice that our Lord said to her: "Do not trouble, I will pay all thy debts and I will supply for all thy negligences." She could not be consoled for having so wastefully squandered the gifts God had given her, for having loved Him so coldly, and for having been so unfaithful to Him who had been so faithful to her and to all. The Sacred Heart, however, had the last word, and it was adorable: "Even if thou wert perfectly faithful to Me, thou shouldst infinitely prefer that My love should repair thy negligences rather than that thou shouldst do it, so that My love may have the honour and glory."

CHAPTER XLV

THANKSGIVING

ALL the graces we have ever received have flowed from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is the love burning there that caused Him to bestow them on us so abundantly.

From the Sacred Heart flowed the Precious Blood that merited these graces for us during the Passion. So gratitude is a duty for the disciple of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and with St. Mechtilde we should say: "What thanksgiving, O source of all sweetness, should be paid Thee for that loving wound received by Thee on the Cross for man? Victorious love pierced Thy loving Heart with a dart, and for our healing water and blood gushed forth. And Thou also, conquered by the love Thou hadst for Thy spouse, didst die of love."

The Blessed Virgin, safe guide of grateful souls, will teach us our duty: "Draw nigh and kiss the wounds my Son received for love of thee. But kiss thrice His loving Heart, thanking Him for having given Himself, now and for ever, to thee and to all the elect."

And our good Mother continues offering us the other wounds of her well-beloved Son. "In kissing the wound in His right hand, thank Him for having helped and co-operated in all thy good works. At the left hand thank Him that He will always be for thee an assured refuge. Kiss also the wound in His right foot in thanksgiving for the ardent desire which caused Him to thirst after thee, all His life. Kiss gratefully also the wound in His left foot, for there thou shalt always find forgiveness for thy sins."

It is a pious practice often to press our lips to the wound

of His most sweet Heart, from which springs for us refreshing water and inebriating wine—viz., the Blood of Christ and, with it, all graces in an infinite number; but in order to please the Sacred Heart we should also add a continual remembrance of it. "Let men meditate with profound gratitude, and keep always in their memory the acts of virtue I practised while on earth, all the sufferings and injuries I bore during thirty-three years, the destitution in which I received the affronts I had to bear from My own creatures, and at last My death on the Cross, that most bitter death borne for love of man. By it, I bought his soul with My Precious Blood to make it My spouse. Let each one have as much love and gratitude for all these benefits as if I had suffered them for his salvation alone."

Such thanksgiving is a joy to the Sacred Heart and profitable to ourselves. This joy and profit cannot be better expressed than by the following passage: Mechtilde thanked our Lord for His sacred wounds, begging Him to wound her soul with as many wounds as He had received in His holy body. Our Lord then said to her: "As often as a man grieves in his soul over the memory of My Passion, so often does he seem to lay a sweet rose on My wounds. From this wound will go forth a dart of love to pierce his soul with a saving wound."

"O Sacred Heart of Jesus, we lay on Thy wound this rose of gratitude, but in return pierce our hearts with the dart of Thy love."

CHAPTER XLVI

CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE in the Sacred Heart is only a practical faith in its love and infinite goodness.

If this confidence relates to the past, it can be defined as a sweet experience of the help of the Sacred Heart in our needs. It then assumes the character of gratitude.

If this confidence relates to the future, it is the profound certainty of the faithfulness of the Sacred Heart in helping us and fulfilling all its promises.

If this confidence relates to the present, it is an actual and lively feeling of the goodness of the Sacred Heart in all circumstances, even that of our own unworthiness. "If He kill me, I will yet hope in Him," said holy Job.

Confidence, then, places the soul in a particular attitude towards the Sacred Heart. Like to that of a child towards its father, it relies on him for its nourishment, for its clothing, for its education, for its future. It feels itself and its destiny to be entirely at its father's disposal, but as it believes firmly in the goodness of its father's heart, it expects all from him and rests in peace. Such is the state of a soul who really trusts the Sacred Heart. It expects all from it, bread for soul and body, forgiveness of its sins, strength to fight the battles of life, deliverance from all evil, and it also expects choice graces and favours of predilection.

Notwithstanding its repeated falls, it hopes still in the infinite tenderness of the Sacred Heart. And this because its confidence does not rest on its own merits, but on the infinite love of God. "His Heart," says Mechtilde, "is simple as that of a dove. It never changes in its

feelings of goodness for man, even though he is so often unfaithful." Too often those who profess piety are lukewarm and feel no love; but the love of the divine Heart is always unchangeable and burning for us. To inspire us with an absolute confidence in His Sacred Heart, Jesus gives us through Mechtilde this admirable lesson:

"I will teach thee three things on which thou mayst meditate each day. Thou shalt gain great profit from them.

"(1) In returning thanks to Me, remember the graces prepared for thee in the Creation and Redemption. I created thee to My own image and likeness. For thee I was made man, and after countless torments for the love of thee suffered a most bitter death.

"(2) Remember with gratitude the benefits I have bestowed on thee, from thy birth to this present moment. By a choice grace I called thee from the world; many times I have lowered Myself to thy soul; I have filled and inebriated it with My grace; I have enlightened it with knowledge and inflamed it with love; every day I come to thee ready to fulfil thy desires and will.

"(3) Remember with praise and thanksgiving the great gifts I am prepared to bestow on thee in heaven; the greatest riches, far beyond what thou canst believe or realize, all that thou desirest shall be there.

"It is a great joy to Me that men expect great gifts from Me. If any of them expected to receive from Me greater rewards than he had deserved after this life and, if, in consequence, he thanked Me for them during his life, he would thus give Me so much pleasure that, no matter how great his faith or extraordinary his confidence, I would reward him beyond his merit; it is impossible that a man should not receive what he has believed and hoped for. Therefore it is good for a man to hope much in Me, and to place in Me all his confidence."

Mechtilde therefore said: "O sweetest Jesus, if it is so

pleasing to Thee that man should trust in Thee, tell me, I pray Thee, what I should believe of Thy ineffable goodness?"

Our Lord replied: "Thou must believe with a firm hope that after thy death I will receive thee as a father receives his well-beloved son, that I will share all that I have with thee, and will give thee part of Myself.

"Further, I will receive thee as a friend receives his dearest friend, and I will show thee a greater love than friend ever received from friend.

"I will also receive thee as a spouse receiving his newly-made bride whom he loves intensely, with so much delight and sweetness. No spouse ever multiplied for his bride so much tenderness as I will lavish on thee, filling thee with joy and inebriating thee with a torrent of happiness from My divinity."

Mechtilde replied: "What wilt Thou give to those who, because of these promises, trust in Thee?" Our Lord answered: "I will give them a thankful heart, with which they will receive My gifts gratefully; I will give them a loving heart, with which they will love Me faithfully; and lastly I will give them hearts to praise Me as the heavenly choirs praise Me, loving and blessing Me always."

Deign to give us such hearts, O Jesus!

CHAPTER XLVII

ORDINARY ACTIONS DONE IN UNION WITH THE SACRED HEART

TRUE devotion to the Sacred Heart leads us to sacrifice to it our entire selves. The soul truly devoted to it has only one thought, the thought of the Sacred Heart; one desire, to please the Sacred Heart; one only preoccupation, to labour, to be spent—in one word, to live for the Sacred Heart. From this proceeds a delicate solicitude to consecrate to it all one's actions, even the most ordinary; the simple use of our senses and material needs, such as eating and sleeping.

And indeed, did not the "Word made Flesh" subject Himself to all these weaknesses and needs of our nature during the thirty-three years He lived on the earth? A soul full of faith knows how to find Him amidst these humiliations and seeming trifles as really as in the Crib, on Thabor, or on Calvary. I say more: He awaits it, so that He may teach it the dispositions it must have in order to be conformed to His own.

Let us listen to Him: "On first awakening in the morning, salute My loving Heart, from which has flowed, flows, and will flow for ever, every good, every joy and every happiness in heaven and on earth. Strive to place thy heart in Mine, and to this end say: 'Praise, blessing, glory and salvation be to Thee, O sweetest and most loving and faithful Heart of Jesus Christ. I thank Thee for having guarded and protected me during this night, and for having praised and thanked God the Father in my stead.'

"And, O Jesus, who lovest me more than any other, I

offer Thee my heart as a refreshing rose; may its beauty draw on it Thy blessing during the whole of this day, and its perfume rejoice Thy divine Heart. I also offer Thee my heart as a cup from which Thou canst drink of Thine own sweetness, with all that Thou wilt do in me during this day. I also offer Thee my heart as an exquisite pomegranate, fit to appear on Thy royal table. I wish that Thou wouldst consume it in such a manner, that this poor heart of mine may in future joyfully know itself to be in Thee. I also supplicate Thee to grant that all my thoughts, words, works and will may be directed to-day according to Thy will and good pleasure. Make, then, the sign of the Cross, saying: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Holy Father, in union with the love of Thy adorable Son I commend my spirit.' And thou shalt repeat this prayer at the commencement of all thy actions.

"Refer thy looks, interior as well as exterior, to divine wisdom, and beg it to give thee light. Refer thy ears to divine mercy, and beg it to preserve thee from hearing what might hurt thee. Offer thy mouth and voice to the ever faithful God, so that they may only say words of wisdom and be preserved from all sin. Offer thy hands to the good God, begging Him to unite thy actions to His works, to sanctify and perfect them in His own and to prevent thee from doing evil. Also offer thy heart to divine love, and beg that it may be so united to the Sacred Heart as to be charmed and inflamed with its love, and may feel no other love or joy on earth. In the same way, during the Mass, offer thy heart to God, and before the Secret purify thyself, turning thy thoughts away from all things of earth, preparing thyself to receive the stream of divine love, which flows into and fills the hearts of those who assist."

Our Lord in this way recommends us with great insistence always to remain united to Him, and He wishes

to realize in some way in us St. Paul's expressive words, "I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me." Hence one day He said to His spouse: "I give thee My eyes that thou mayst see all things through them, My ears so that by them thou mayst understand all thou hearest; I also give thee My mouth that by it thou mayst accomplish all that thou hast to say, to pray or to sing; and lastly I give thee My Heart, so that thou mayst think by it, and love Me with Myself."

At these last words our Lord absorbed the whole soul, and united Himself so intimately with it, that it seemed to see with the eyes of God, hear with His ears, speak by His mouth, and have no other heart than that of God.

So intimate and perfect a union is a privilege of the few only. Yet our Lord exacts from all the ordinary union accomplished by a supernatural intention.

"Man ought to unite himself to Me in all his actions—as, for instance, if he wishes to eat or sleep, he ought to say in his heart: 'Lord, in union with the love which made Thee create this food for me, I take it for Thy eternal praise, and because I need refreshment.'"

For sleep our Lord Himself indicates the intention with which we ought to take it. He wishes we should go to sleep in drawing five sighs from His divine Heart.

"Before sleep draw from My Heart a sigh in union with that praise which it dispensed in favour of all the Saints and as a supplement of what was owing from all creatures. Also a sigh in union with that gratitude which the Saints drew from My Heart, and which they returned for all the gifts I had bestowed on them. The soul ought, then, to sigh for its own sins and those of others, in union with that compassion which made Me bear the sins of all. It must also sigh for the love and desire it has to obtain for men all that is necessary for the glory of God and their own needs; it will thus unite itself to the

divine desires I had on earth for man's salvation. Lastly, it must sigh in union with all the prayers which were poured forth from My Heart and from those of My Saints for the salvation of all, whether living or dead; it ought to desire that each breath, during the sleep of this night, might be accepted by Me as an incessant sigh. As it is impossible for Me to refuse anything to a loving soul, I will fill them according to the plenitude of My divine truth."

How holy would one night be, if preceded by such sighs! Happy the souls faithful to a perpetual union with the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER XLVIII

DIVINE PRAISE

THROUGH the Sacred Heart alone can we adore God in a manner worthy of His infinite Love.

Nothing is more in accordance with the doctrine of the Church than St. Mechtilde's teaching on the part taken by the Sacred Heart in the divine praise. The Son of God made man alone offers a homage worthy of the Blessed Trinity; and it is through Him that Angels and men may praise the divine Majesty.

This doctrine is fully expressed in the Preface of the Mass: "It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Everlasting God: through Christ our Lord. Through whom the Angels praise, the Dominations adore and the Powers fear, Thy Majesty; the Heavens also and the Heavenly Powers, and the Blessed Seraphim glorify it in common exultation. With whom, we beseech Thee, bid that our voices also be admitted in suppliant praise, saying: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts. Full are the Heavens and the Earth of Thy glory: Hosanna in the Highest!"

So we see that all praise reaching heaven must pass through the lips and Heart of Christ.

Leaning one day on the wound of the sweet Heart of our Saviour, which was all hers, St. Mechtilde drew from it a most delicious kind of fruit and raised it to her lips. This signified the eternal praise which proceeds from this divine Heart; indeed, all divine praise comes from this Heart, pure source of all good.

Mechtilde sang thanksgivings to God and prayed the

Son of God Himself, the youthful Spouse of all loving souls, to render to God the Father loving praise for so great and inestimable a gift.

O admirable condescension! The Son of God at once presented Himself respectfully before His heavenly Father and praised His greatness in these terms:

Cœtus in excelsis te laudat cœlicus omnis,
Et mortalis homo et cuncta creata simul.

"All the celestial choirs praise Thee in the highest
And mortal man and all creatures join in the concert."

By these words "celestial choirs" Mechtilde understood that our Lord drew to Himself in one accord the praises of all the heavenly citizens; and by the words "mortal man," that He united to them the intentions of all men; and by "all creatures" that He united in Himself the substance of all creatures in order to celebrate the praise of God the Father. In the same way, He resounded for them, in the presence of God the Father, praise in the name of heaven, earth and hell.

The greatest desire of the Sacred Heart is that we should excite in ourselves the spirit of praise and of adoration in spirit and truth, which He announced to the Samaritan woman as the mark of His true disciples. St. Mechtilde continued: "O sweet and loving Jesus, what dost Thou prefer that I should do?" He replied: "Praise." Mechtilde answered: "But do Thou teach me to praise Thee worthily."

She then learnt from our Lord that she should strike three times on the Sacred Heart. The first stroke was to praise the Blessed Trinity for Its infinite greatness and she accompanied it with these words "To Thee be honour and empire, to Thee glory and power, to Thee praise and jubilation, during eternity, O Blessed Trinity." At the second stroke she gave to the Sacred Heart she praised God for all the graces granted to the Blessed Virgin and to the Saints already in possession of heaven; she then

said: "It is just that all Thy creatures should praise, adore and glorify Thee, O Blessed Trinity. To Thee praise, glory and thanksgiving!" The third time that Mechtilde knocked on the Sacred Heart it was to praise God for all the graces He had showered on the just to sanctify them, on sinners to convert them, on the souls in purgatory who, each day, are absolved by His mercy and brought to the joys of heaven; and this last time she said: "All comes from God, in Him all live. To Him be glory for ever and ever! To Thee praise—*Tibi laus!*"

After these praises her soul entered the sweet Heart of Jesus and there, become one with her Well-beloved, she saw and tasted what is not possible for man to express.

The virgins who follow the Lamb sing a new song, not known to profane lips. But it is still from the Sacred Heart that comes the heavenly harmony. Three strings, like those of a harp, detached themselves, went through the Heart of the Immaculate Virgin, then through the hearts of all holy virgins and met in the Heart of Jesus. There also Mechtilde heard music like that from an organ, and she remembered the words: "There resound continually the musical instruments of the Saints."

CHAPTER XLIX

THE SACRED HEART ITSELF TRAINS MECHTILDE IN DIVINE PRAISE

ST. MECHTILDE had a beautiful voice, so she had charge of the choir in the Monastery of Helfta. She brought to her work both faith and zeal. Our Lord Himself deigned to install her in this important employment.

This happened on the feast of the Annunciation. After humbling herself profoundly before our Lord she begged Him to forgive her all her sins, and by the merits of His holy life to supply for all her imperfections. As soon as she had received from our Lord the precious gift of forgiveness of all her sins, she felt bold enough to rest on the breast of Jesus, her Well-beloved. She then beheld, coming from the Heart of our Lord, a golden pipe with which she celebrated the praises of God.

She understood and begged of our Lord to celebrate His own praise. At once, she heard the sweet voice of Christ, the divine Cantor, intone this canticle: "Give praise to our God, all ye His Saints" (Apoc. xix. 5). Our Lord gave her to understand that He alone, as God, was able to sing praise worthy of the Sovereign Majesty. For which reason, He would transform her into Himself, so that she might be associated with Him in the divine praise.

He placed His hands on hers, giving her all the labours and good works of His sacred Humanity. He then placed His eyes with such a sweet look on St. Mechtilde's eyes, giving her with the merits of His holy eyes an abundant flow of tears. He then applied His ears to those of His servant, so enriching her with the merits

of His holy ears. Then placing His mouth on hers, He made her share in the words of praise, the thanksgiving of His life and His preaching, to supply for all her negligences. He then placed His most sweet Heart on Mechtilde's, giving her a share in His meditations, His acts of devotion and love, and so enriched her abundantly with all His treasures. In this way Mechtilde's soul was entirely absorbed in that of our Lord, melted by divine love, as wax is melted by fire. Immersed in our Lord she acquired His likeness, as though it had been engraved on her, and she became one with her Beloved. As the time for receiving Holy Communion drew near, she heard Him whom her heart loved say: "Thou in Me, and I in thee; never will I forsake thee."

The only thing Mechtilde desired in this world was the glory of God. Seconding this desire our Lord gave her His Heart as a golden cup delicately chased, saying to her: "With My divine Heart thou shalt always praise Me. Go and give My Saints to drink from My Heart a liquor of life which will plunge them into a blessed intoxication. She went to the Patriarchs and to the Prophets to whom she gave to drink saying: "Receive Him whom you have so long desired and waited for; pray that I may desire Him with all my strength and sigh ceaselessly for Him, night and day."

She then went to the Apostles, saying to them: "Receive Him whom you have loved so ardently and with your whole heart; pray that I may also love Him fervently, above all, and with my whole heart." Then to the Martyrs she said: "Behold Jesus. For His love you shed your blood and delivered your body to death; obtain for me that I may generously spend myself in His service." She then came to the Confessors. "Receive Him," she said, "for whom you left all, despising the pleasures of this world; obtain for me, that I may despise all joys for His love and attain to the summit of religious perfection."

Coming at last to the Virgins, she gave them to drink, saying: "Receive Him to whom you have consecrated your virginity, and grant that in all things I may triumph, through chastity of mind and body."

Then having gone round the heavenly court she returned to our Lord, and He, receiving His Heart, this golden cup, placed it in Mechtilde's breast, who was thus happily united to our Lord.

After this vision Mechtilde was able to sing the praises of God. It was no longer she who sang, but Jesus living in her. O, what a loving installation as Cantor! You who, by the beauty of your voices, glorify our Lord, beg of Jesus a similar installation and sing with the same fervour and perfection.

CHAPTER L

THE INTENTIONS OF THE HEART OF JESUS IN DIVINE PRAISE

OUR Lord would repeat His instructions to the holy Benedictine on the intentions required for singing the divine praise.

She complained one day of having been unfaithful. Jesus, laying His divine Heart on hers, said to her: "Now My Heart is thine, and thy heart is Mine"—*Nunc Cor meum tuum est et cor tuum meum est.* And, in a sweet embrace, He drew her soul so intimately to Himself with His divine strength that in future she was only one spirit with Him.

Our Lord Himself then indicated the intention she was to have during the Office. "At Matins, as soon as thou hast risen, consider respectfully how, forced by My love, I allowed Myself to be bound by wicked hands and became obedient unto death; prepare thy heart to obey all that shall be commanded thee, even if this day thou hadst to perform all the acts of obedience accomplished by all the Saints.

"At Prime adore the humility with which I appeared before the most unworthy of judges as a most meek Lamb to be judged; then submit thyself to every creature for My sake, and be ready to perform the lowest and most degrading work.

"At Tierce consider the love which caused Me to be despised, spit upon and covered with opprobrium; then despise thyself and hold thyself in low estimation.

"At Sext, that the world may be crucified to thee and thou to the world, consider how I was fastened to the

Cross for thee; therefore all the pleasures and joys of the world should be for thee nothing but a bitter cross.

"At None die to the world and every creature. Consequently the bitterness of My death should be sweetness to thy heart, and every creature as such inspire thee with contempt and disgust.

"At Vespers, the hour when I was taken down from the Cross, remember that after death and the end of thy labours, thou shalt rest in a blessed repose in My Heart.

"At Compline think of that blessed union when, become one spirit with Me, thou shalt enjoy Me fully. This union will begin by the submission of thy will to Mine, in prosperity as in adversity, and will be perfect on the day on which thou shalt enter into the glory which shall never end."

Mechtilde often said: "Teach me to praise Thee." And our Lord always replied: "Consider My Heart."

CHAPTER LI

THE SACRED HEART AND CONFESSION

THE Sacrament of Penance is the most merciful invention of divine love. There are hidden all the treasures of satisfaction amassed by Jesus on Calvary, and when they please all sinners may come to take what they need. Whatever their crimes may be, they will return purified, holy with the holiness of Jesus Christ Himself, rich with the drops of His blood, as Magdalen was formerly at the foot of the Cross.

With this Sacrament, as with all the others, man must co-operate by his acts. Carefulness in examination, confusion and sincerity in avowal, sorrow and firm purpose in repentance—all these are required of the penitent. Our Lord exacts them as an essential condition for forgiveness. We must, therefore, fulfil our own part of the Sacrament with diligent care, but also with great discretion.

Before confession we ought to strip ourselves of what is faulty in us by contrition, as Christ was stripped before the scourging and crucifixion. And if Christ was stripped to be scourged, man ought to divest himself of all sinful affections, before confessing his sins. What an excellent reason this is for us to look sincerely into our conscience and then afterwards to confess our sins honestly to Christ's representative!

For the examination of conscience, St. Mechtilde recommended the practice of placing the Sacred Heart and its virtues before ourselves as a mirror. So in the mirror of the humility of Jesus man might consider carefully his own humility and see if he has not stained

his soul by pride or haughtiness. In the mirror of the patience of the Sacred Heart man should test his own patience and see if he discover not some impatience in himself. In the mirror of the obedience of the Sacred Heart he should examine his conduct and see if he has not been disobedient. In the mirror of the love of the Sacred Heart he should ask himself what love he has had for His Superiors, and whether he has been peaceful with his equals and full of kindness to his inferiors.

If in these, or other points, man finds some stain on his soul he must efface it with the application of the humanity of Christ; he must remember that Christ is our brother, and that in His tender goodness He forgives man his sins, as soon as they are acknowledged.

Mechtilde added a recommendation which ought to be received gratefully by scrupulous souls. Man should be careful not to wash his stains with too much eagerness —that is, without considering the divine goodness; for by effacing them too eagerly he might easily injure rather than heal, his soul.

What a number of souls have been injured by their exaggerations! Let them rather go to the Sacred Heart, source of all mercy, trusting in its loving kindness, for it is Jesus Himself who forgives sin when the priest pronounces the words of absolution. Mechtilde saw our Lord one day sitting at the right hand of the divine Majesty blotting out sins. As each Sister came with a contrite heart to confess her sins, our Lord enfolded each with His right arm and by His merits effaced her sins as though they had never existed. After having purified them in this manner He presented each to His heavenly Father, who looking lovingly on them said: "The right hand of My Just One has protected thee and obtained for thee a sincere reconciliation."

It sometimes happens, however, that the most calm souls are disturbed in receiving the Sacrament of Penance.

They think they are quite unable to discover the depths of malice and corruption of their fallen nature. Even the priest could not descend to the depths of the perversity of their hearts. In these distressing but sanctifying circumstances St. Mechtilde suggests the following practice:

If a person having sincerely made her confession fears to have made a bad confession, and yet finds nothing on her conscience that she has not confessed, she must make to God a confession of praise; acknowledging the failings she perceives in herself and extolling by her praises His divinity; she will confess how guilty she has been in not having shown to our Lord sufficient respect, in having so often tarnished in herself the image of God, in having filled her memory with worldly and useless things, in having used her mind to gain worldly knowledge, and in having taken pleasure in what was vile and fleeting.

In the same way, after having extolled the clear-sightedness of the divine eyes, she will mourn for having cared too much for earthly things, for having abused the use of her senses, and for not having profited by her knowledge of God.

Also, having praised the mercy of the divine ears, she will accuse herself of not having listened as she ought to the word of God, and of not having condescended to listen to others.

How many sins are committed by the tongue, by murmuring, by vain and useless words; by silence when God or His doctrine ought to have been spoken of; by silence at the time of prayer or praise.

And how often has the soul impatiently shaken off the yoke she had accepted at Baptism, because things were not to her liking! She has been either unwilling to carry it, or has carried it against the grain. And the yoke of religion which, in the presence of the Saints, she has received at her profession, promising to belong

entirely to God, how often has she not broken it by refusing to obey!

In remembering with what cruelty Jesus Christ was scourged, she recognizes that her fault lies in not chastising her body, but in flattering it in its softness and in delicately nourishing it.

She has also sinned before the divine Heart in not loving God with her whole heart, in not meditating on the law of God, thinking rather of useless things. She has sinned with her hands in doing wrong, in avoiding good works, especially those of mercy and charity done in common. She has also soiled her feet spiritually—that is, her affections—when she has turned them from God and has not directed her aspirations towards Him and heavenly things with her whole heart.

The voice of our conscience may multiply its accusations and reproaches, the Angels and Saints themselves may witness against us, but let us listen to the voice of Jesus, more powerful than the voice of our iniquities: "O my Father, I will answer for all that is brought against each one of them, for My Heart is pierced for love of them."

What has attracted Thee, O Jesus? "My own free choice; I chose them for My own, from all eternity."

So, with the same confidence as St. Mechtilde, relying on such a surety, let us take our crucifix into our hands saying to God the Father:

"I offer Thee, O adorable Father, Thy very humble Son, who has paid all the debts I have contracted by my pride. I offer Thee Thy most meek Son who has sacrificed for all the sins I have committed by anger. I also offer Thee Thy most amiable Son and the love of His Heart, which has fully satisfied for all my failings. His boundless liberality has, in advance, paid for all my sins. His holy zeal has supplied for my cowardice. His perfect abstinence has atoned for my intemperance. The purity of

His innocent life has obtained pardon for all the evil I have committed in thought, word, or deed. His perfect obedience, which made Him obedient unto death, has blotted out my disobediences, and His perfection has atoned for my imperfection."

CHAPTER LII

ON PURITY OF CONSCIENCE

THE holiest souls are often saddened by their failings, and sometimes their faults, though slight, become for them an obstacle to frequent Communion. They dare not receive our Lord! What is to be done?

One day Mechtilde wanted to go to confession; but there was no confessor, so she was much grieved, as she could not receive Holy Communion.

She therefore began to pray. She accused herself bitterly of all her sins to God the High Priest, of her negligences, and of all her faults, and He assured her that her sins were forgiven. Returning thanks at once for this great favour, she said to our Lord: "O my sweet Saviour, what has now become of all my sins?" He replied: "When a powerful King comes to stay in a house, it is at once cleaned so that nothing should offend his eyes, but if he is so near that there is no time to carry away the dirt it is carefully hidden in a corner to be afterwards thrown away. In the same way, if thou hast the will to confess thy sins and a firm purpose not to commit them again, they are completely blotted out, and I will remember them no more, but thou must remember them in the confessional. The will and desire which thou hast to avoid sin with all thy strength and power are bonds which attach and unite Me to thee so that nothing could ever separate us."

Jesus had spoken and yet Mechtilde hesitated. This is what so often happens to timorous souls who dare not advance even at the priest's word. Many different reasons caused her to hesitate. She thought herself

unworthy to partake of the banquet of the King of Angels; she felt it impossible to receive so magnificent a gift without preparation and confession. On the other hand, our Lord had suggested thoughts of hope and consolation.

Our Lord spoke again. "Reflect," He said, "on this. Every desire that a soul has ever had to possess Me is inspired by Me; it is like the Holy Scriptures and the words of the Saints which proceed, and shall ever proceed, from My Spirit."

She therefore felt more confidence, and her heart was filled with so much courage that henceforth nothing seemed capable of thwarting her desire.

She approached the heavenly banquet of the Body and Blood of Christ. Then she heard our Lord Himself say to her: "Wouldst thou know how I am in thy heart?" And at once she saw a dazzling brightness like the rays of the sun streaming from her person, and by that she understood the working of divine grace in her soul and a sure mark of God's love for her.

Sin must therefore be washed away in the Sacrament of Penance. Our Lord has decreed that all mortal sins shall be so absolved. This is not necessary in the case of lighter sins, our daily failings; for these love suffices.

Once Mechtilde saw some sinners present themselves before our Lord. They carried their sins on their shoulders and then laid them at His feet. Their sins were then changed into golden jewels, because their sorrow was more actuated by the love of God than by fear of punishment. Those sins, carried with repentance to the feet of our Lord, had for Him the same value as the perfume of St. Mary Magdalene, patron of penitents. Our Lord said: "What shall we do with these faults and these presents? Let them be burned in the fire of love." *His visus dominus: quid de his faciemus? Utroque in amore omnia concrementur*—'Lord, open for me the furnace

of Thy Heart and cause all my iniquities to be burned therein.' "

One Sunday, while they were singing the *Asperges*, Mechtilde said to our Lord: "My Lord, with what wilt Thou now wash and purify my heart?" Then our Lord with inexpressible love leaned over her, as a mother over her son, took her into His arms, and said: "I will wash thee with the love of My divine Heart"—*In amore divini cordis mei te lavabo.* He then opened His Heart, treasury of divine mercy, and she saw therein a river of flowing water; it was the river of love. Her soul plunged into it, and at once was cleansed from all its stains.

But how are we to obtain that this living water of the Sacred Heart should reach our souls? By acts of love.

One day, Mechtilde saw flowing, with much force, a swift and pure stream from the divine Heart. It was going to purify from all their sins the souls who had prayed for her through charity, and our Lord said to her: "Acts of charity cleanse men from venial sin; but sin clings to the soul like pitch; it ought, therefore, often to be cleansed away by confession and great contrition. I guard in My Heart all works of charity as a most precious treasure. I wait until he who has performed them comes to Me, and then I return them to him to augment his merit and graces."

CHAPTER LIII

THE SACRED HEART AND HOLY MASS

THE thrice holy Sacrifice of the Cross is renewed on our Altars. Holy souls devoted to the Sacred Heart know how to find there the drops of blood fallen from this fountain during the Passion. They here offer to the infinite majesty of God all the adoration, annihilation and satisfaction of the Sacred Heart. The Heart of Jesus is the centre of the Sacrifice of the Mass. From this Heart all flows for God and for man. Mechtilde was allowed to contemplate the grandeur of this mystery.

During Holy Mass she once saw the Heart of Jesus Christ under the appearance of a lamp. It was as brilliant and transparent as a living flame. From this divine Heart overflowed on all around floods of sweetness, which filled the hearts of all who assisted at Mass. The flame signified the fire of divine love which burnt in the Heart of Christ when He offered Himself to God the Father on the altar of the Cross. The sweetness which overflowed signified the innumerable blessings and immeasurable happiness which He has bestowed on us through His divine Heart. In it we possess all that is necessary for salvation, praise and thanksgiving, as well as prayer, love, desire, satisfaction and reparation for all our negligences.

Our Divine Lord said to His servant: "At the Mass offer thy heart to God, and before beginning thy prayer purify and detach it from all terrestrial thoughts, so preparing it to receive the inflowing of divine love which inundates and fills the hearts of those who assist. I also deliver Myself entirely, with all I possess, into the power of thy soul, and in that way thou canst dispose of Me as thou wilt."

One day when she was troubled with distractions and hindered from uniting herself to God during Mass, she begged our Blessed Lady to obtain for her the presence of her well-beloved Son. Through the intercession of the divine mediatrix between God and man she again saw Jesus on the Altar. She saw Him seated on a raised throne, clear as crystal. In front of this throne sprang two beautifully clear streams, one signifying the remission of sins, and the other spiritual consolation. These are the gifts given more especially and abundantly during Mass by divine providence. At the oblation of the Sacred Host our Lord, who is Himself this divine throne, seemed to elevate with His own hands his sweet Heart as a lamp which shone and was filled to overflowing. The divine oil overflowed on all sides so that it splashed up in large drops, and yet what had overflowed had not lessened what the lamp contained. From which we may understand that all receive of the abundance of our Lord's Heart, each one according to his capacity, but that He loses nothing of the superabundance of His beatitude nor does it suffer the smallest diminution.

O marvellous treasury, never-failing source of blessings, what folly in man to neglect to avail himself of it! But in order to participate therein we must bring the necessary dispositions.

One day that Mechtilde was going to assist at Mass she saw our Lord coming from heaven clothed in white. He said to her: "When men go to Church they should prepare themselves by penance, striking their breast and confessing their sins. They may then approach My dazzling purity. This is what is signified by My white clothing."

During the Holy Sacrifice the Sacred Heart is therefore an open treasury from which we may take all we need. But what are we to think of the Sacred Heart? With what dispositions is it offered on the altar by the hands

of its humble minister? Who could tell, O Jesus, unless Thou didst Thyself reveal it?

Our Lord offers Himself to us during Mass with seven different dispositions. In the first, He comes with such humility that none is too lowly or vile for His condescension, if desirous of receiving Him. In the second, He comes with such patience as to endure any enemy or sinner and, if the sinner wished it, He would forgive him all his sins. In the third, He comes with such love as to inflame the coldest and hardest-hearted worshipper with His love and touch his heart, if it have in it any lingering spark of desire. In the fourth, He comes with such generosity as to enrich the poorest person present. In the fifth, He offers Himself to all as a sweet and satisfying food, so that there is no one so ill or so hungry as cannot be restored or fully satiated by Him. In the sixth, He comes with such light as to illumine the most blind or darkened mind with His presence. In the seventh, He comes with such sanctity and grace as to help the most cowardly and distracted to shake off his torpor, and stir him to devotion.

And we who go before this God to receive Holy Communion, with what dispositions should we present ourselves to receive Him?

"While they sing the *Sanctus*," our Lord tells us, "let each one say a *Pater*, and beg of Me to prepare him, in giving him the all-powerful, wise and sweet love of My Heart, that he may receive Me worthily into his heart so that I may work and effect therein, according to My will, what I had resolved and ordained from all eternity."

And what should be our thanksgiving? During the Communion this verse may be recited:

> "I praise Thee, O love so strong!
> I bless Thee, O love so wise!
> I glorify Thee, O love so sweet!"

"I exalt Thee, O love full of goodness, in all the works, and for all the good that Thy glorious divinity and blessed humanity have deigned to operate by Thy most holy Heart, and that it will continue to operate to all eternity.

"At the priest's benediction I will bless thee thus: 'May My power bless thee, may My wisdom instruct thee, may My sweetness fill thee, and may My goodness draw thee and unite thee to Me, for ever. Amen.'"

Illness sometimes prevents Christians from going to the church. Mechtilde had also to bear this trial; she groaned and complained to our Lord at being thus put aside. Our Lord consoled her thus: "There where thou art, I am also."

She asked if she did not lose much in hearing Mass from so great a distance. Our Lord said to her: "It is good to be present, but, when impossible, and when illness, obedience, or any other legitimate reason prevents, then, where thou art, I am also present."

Mechtilde then said: "O Lord, give now to my soul some spiritual consolation drawn from the words of the Mass." Our Lord replied: "At this moment they are singing the *Agnus Dei* three times. At the first, offer Me to God the Father with all My humility and patience for thyself: at the second, offer Me and all the bitterness of My Passion in order to obtain perfect forgiveness of thy sins: at the third, offer Me with all the love of My Heart to supply for all that man cannot do." Our Lord added: "Verily, to him who with zeal and devotion hears Mass, I will send at his last hour as many of the greatest Saints as he has heard Masses to console, defend, and form a guard of honour to him."

The Saints have rejoiced so much at the Masses said in their honour, that, intoxicated with joy in the Sacred Heart, they have appeared to the dying man as much to thank him as to help him. May the poor sick accept

this sweet consolation from the Sacred Heart! It is with you where you are. But, even so, when you hear the tinkle of the bell which foretells the coming of Jesus on our altars, offer Him three times, as He Himself asks.

But all you who have strength and leisure, assist every day at Holy Mass, so as to increase the number of Saints who shall assemble to help you at the hour of your death, according to the promise of the Sacred Heart.

Even here below we receive numberless graces through the Sacred Heart immolated on our altars. Mechtilde saw the Sacred Heart under the form of a lamp, which overflowed all around, but she also saw the hearts of those who assisted at Mass and her own, under the appearance of lamps united by mysterious bonds to the Heart of Jesus. Some were upright, full of oil, and seemed alight, others were empty and seemed overturned. By the upright, well-lighted lamps were designated the hearts of those who assisted at Mass with fervour and devotion. The empty, overturned lamps represented the hearts of those who were negligent and did not attempt to stir up their devotion.

CHAPTER LIV

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

THE most perfect union with our Lord is effected by the reception of His most holy Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

There, as at no other time, meet the Heart of Jesus and the heart of His disciple. It is, therefore, the most suitable time for pouring out our love and assuring Him of our irrevocable fidelity. A fervent soul longs eagerly for this happy time. And our Lord tells us that one of the greatest desires of His Heart—*desiderio desideravi*—is to eat this mysterious Pasch with us. This is the reason why He grieves when, through negligence, tepidity, or human respect, He sees us abstain from Holy Communion.

"My well-beloved," He said one day to a soul guilty of this neglect, "why dost thou fly from Me?" Mechtilde was astonished that our Lord spoke to this person with so much tenderness; but He said to her: "I will call her my well-beloved all the days of her life." "But after her death," asked St. Mechtilde, "will she be deprived of so tender a name?" Our Lord replied: "She will keep it for all eternity."

And speaking again to a timid soul, He said: "Draw near, with confidence, to the omnipotence of the Father, that He may strengthen thee; to the wisdom of the Son, that He may enlighten thee; and to the love of the Holy Ghost, that He may fill thee with His sweetness."

Again, another soul dared not approach the most Holy Communion, fearing she was not worthy. "Let her receive Me frequently," said our Lord; "every time she comes I will receive her as My legitimate queen."

Who could resist so sweet an invitation? Jesus treats our souls as His well-beloved, as His queen. And yet,

how many still hesitate! Holy Communion is frequented, but often only at long intervals.

Mechtilde prayed for one of those souls who feared to communicate often. Our Lord said to her: "The more often a soul communicates, the purer it becomes, as we become cleaner if we wash often. The more often a soul communicates, the more I operate in it; and the more it works with Me, its actions become more holy. The more often a soul communicates, the more profoundly does it dwell in Me; and the more it penetrates into the abyss of My divinity, the more is that soul dilated and capable of containing the divinity. In the same way water falling on a certain spot of stone at length wears a cavity to fill."

This marvellous immersion operated by Holy Communion is explained by our Lord in another way. One day after she had received Holy Communion He said to St. Mechtilde: "I am in thee and thou art in Me by My power, as a fish in the water." Mechtilde felt obliged to say: "But, Lord, the fish are sometimes drawn by nets out of the water; what if the same happened to me?" Our Lord calmed this fear: "No one could draw thee away from Me," He said; "thou shalt make thy nest in My divine Heart." "My nest in Thy divine Heart, O Jesus: of what shall this nest be made?" "It shall be formed of humility amidst the gifts and graces which I have conferred on thee. Cast thyself into the abyss of a profound humility." "O Lord, fish grow in the water, but shall I bear fruit in Thy divine Heart?" "Yes, and such abundant fruit that all heaven will rejoice. When thou shalt offer Me to God the Father for the joy and glory of the Saints, their happiness and recompense shall be increased, as though they had received Me corporally on the earth."

Who would not by Holy Communion build his nest in the Heart of Jesus and in that way increase the joy of the Angels and Saints?

CHAPTER LV

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

WE must prepare carefully for Holy Communion. The Apostle says: "Let a man prove himself, and then eat of this Bread and drink of this Chalice."

The preparation must be thorough, worthy of the Guest we are going to receive, but regulated by prudence and kept within the rules of discretion, otherwise too much solicitude about preparation might prevent us going to Holy Communion. Exaggeration, on this head, was the infernal means by which Jansenism tried to prevent frequent Communion.

Our Lord gave St. Mechtilde some delightful instructions for our edification. One day when she ought to have received Holy Communion and thought herself unfit through want of preparation, our Lord said to her: "I give Myself entirely to thee, to be Myself thy preparation." And He placed His Heart on that of St. Mechtilde and laid His Head on her head. She then said: "O Lord, enlighten the face of my soul with the brightness of Thy countenance." Our Lord replied: "The face of thy soul is the image of the Holy Trinity. The soul should see this image reflected in My face as in a mirror, and see whether he finds some stain in that image."

Mechtilde understood that we should often contemplate our soul in this divine Mirror, the face of Jesus Christ, so as to discover any stains that might disfigure it, and wash them away before Holy Communion. Purity of conscience, then, is the first preparation, but the Sacred Heart expects more.

He gives a second lesson. "O loving Lord," said

Mechtilde, "teach me how to prepare for the royal banquet of Thy adorable Body and Blood." Our Lord answered: "What did My disciples do when I sent them before Me to prepare the Pasch which I was to eat with them the night before my Passion? They prepared a large and well-furnished hall."

By this our Lord wishes us to remember that with repentance He desires confidence—confidence in His immense bounty and liberality in lovingly receiving those who go to Him. We must have confidence in His clemency, for He will receive us kindly as a mother, guarding us from all evil; confidence in His love, which offers a sure welcome to all who communicate, enriching them with His best gifts; confidence in His tenderness, which will bestow on them faith and hope to obtain all that is necessary for salvation.

To this unlimited confidence we must join the remembrance of the Passion. St. Mechtilde always observed this, our Lord having said: "Do this in memory of Me" (Luke xxi. 9). The Holy Ghost deigned to comment on the words: "Do this in memory of Me."

There are three things we should remember in receiving the Body of Christ. The first is the eternal love of the Father, which caused Him to love us before we were made, though He knew well all our defects and wickedness, despite which He created us to His own image and likeness, and for this we should thank Him. The second is the marvellous love which caused the Son of God, though He abounded with delight in the bosom of the Father, to come down on the earth. He left His infinite majesty and descended to our misery, to us captives in the bonds of Adam. Hunger, cold, heat, weariness, sadness, contempt, suffering and the most ignominious death, He bore with a divine patience, so as to deliver us from our miseries. The third is the unheard-of love with which He always watches over us, taking care of us

in His paternal tenderness. So, after being our Creator and Redeemer, as a loving brother He intercedes always for us with the Father, regulates and directs our concerns as an attendant and faithful servant.

These three things we should always bear in remembrance, but especially when partaking of the celestial banquet, the heavenly legacy of the love of Jesus, of which we should always keep before us the remembrance.

Our Lord also deigned Himself to teach us the intention we should have in receiving Holy Communion.

It was the custom in the Community to indicate by a tablet that they intended to communicate, and this tablet bore the name of the Religious. In writing it Mechtilde said: "Write, dear Lord, my name on Thy Heart and inscribe also Thy sweet Name on my heart by a perpetual remembrance." Our Lord then said to her one day: "When thou wilt communicate, receive Me with an intention as strong as if thou hadst all the desires and all the love which ever filled a human heart. Filled with the strongest love that the heart of man can contain, come to Me. I will then receive this love from thee, not such as it really is in thee, but such as thou wouldst wish it to be."

So our Lord was faithful to His promise: "I will give Myself entirely to thee to be thy preparation."

CHAPTER LVI

THE FIVE HAIL MARYS BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

ST. MECHTILDE'S pious custom was to recite five *Hail Marys* before receiving Holy Communion, and these were her intentions:

At the first *Hail Mary*, she reminded our Lady of the solemn hour when she conceived a Son in her virginal womb, at the word of the Angel, and drew Him to her from heaven by her profound humility. She asked her to obtain for her a pure conscience and profound humility.

At the second *Hail Mary*, she reminded her of the happy moment when she took Jesus for the first time into her arms and first saw Him in His Sacred Humanity. She prayed Mary to obtain for her a true knowledge of herself.

At the third *Hail Mary*, she begged our Lady to remember that she had always been prepared to receive grace and had never placed any obstacle to its operation. She begged Mary to obtain for her a heart always ready to receive divine grace.

At the fourth *Hail Mary*, she reminded our Lady with what devotion and gratitude she received on earth the body of her well-beloved Son, knowing better than anyone the salvation to be found there by mankind. Mechtilde begged her to obtain that her heart might be filled with worthy feelings of gratitude. If men knew the blessings which flow for them from the body of Jesus Christ, they would faint with joy.

At the fifth *Hail Mary*, she reminded our Lady of the reception given to her by her divine Son when He invited her to take her place near Him in heaven in the midst of transports of joy.

CHAPTER LVII

OF DRYNESS IN RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

ONE of the greatest trials of a pious soul is to feel nothing but dryness and desolation when Jesus enters their heart. If it were only a matter of sorrow and complaint, it would not be so serious, but alas! it is often made a pretext for abstaining from Holy Communion.

Our Lord gives this instruction to them for their consolation: "When thou art preparing for Holy Communion and only feelest thy heart dry, with no desire nor love for prayer nor any of the love thou oughtest to have, cry with all thy strength to the Lord: 'Draw us, and we will run after Thee to the odour of Thy ointments.' And in saying this word 'Draw us,' think how strong and powerful was the love which drew the almighty and eternal God down to the ignominious death of the Cross. Filled with an ardent desire for Him who said 'When I shall be lifted up from the earth I will draw all things unto Myself,' beg of Him that He would draw thy heart and all the powers of thy soul so strongly to Himself that He will cause thee to run with love and desire in the odour of the three perfumes which come from the very noble reservoir of My Heart with so great an abundance that they fill heaven and earth.

"The first perfume is the living water which divine love distilled from the noble rose of the divine Heart in the furnace of charity. With this perfume wash the face of thy soul. If after a serious examination thou dost find any stain of sin, beg that it may be cleansed in the fountain of mercy which bathed the thief on the cross.

"The second perfume is the generous wine of the Precious Blood of the Crucified which issued with water from the wound of His Sacred Heart. Beg that the face of thy soul may be tinged with it, so as to be worthy to take a place at so great a banquet.

"The third perfume is the marvellous meekness which overflows from the divine Heart. This meekness, which the bitterness of death could not exhaust, is a perfume of balsam which surpasses every aromatic perfume and is a remedy for every infirmity of soul. Beg that this perfume may be poured into thy soul so that it may taste and see that the Lord is sweet. It will be nourished by this sweetness, it will expand and enter entirely into Him who has given Himself to thee with so much love.

"When thou shalt feel none of this sweetness of which we have been speaking, beg of thy sweet and faithful Jesus, who loves thee, to draw it from Himself; beg that what is insipid in thee may partake of His savour, that thy tepidity may gain fervour from Him; and that He alone may be glorified in all thy works, now and for ever."

So, with us too, O Sacred Heart, either Thy perfumes will bestow on us the sweetness of Thy fervour, or our dryness fill Thee with joy. But we will continue always to go to Thee.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE FRUIT OF HOLY COMMUNION

ST. BENEDICT'S holy daughter is never tired of presenting the Sacred Heart to us as the source of all good, all happiness, and every virtue.

Its influence on souls is increasing, but it is never more powerful than after Holy Communion. Then our Lord not only gives graces, but Himself; and He gives Himself that He may be everything to the soul in its needs. If we are weak, He rests in our breast as a shield, to be our defence and strength against our enemies. If we aspire to practise virtue, He comes to communicate to us His own.

In this manner St. Mechtilde saw Him give Himself one Good Friday to the Religious as buried in aromatic perfumes of delicious odour. The aromatic perfume came from all parts of His Sacred Heart and blossomed like flowers, so that this divine Heart was like a mass of flowers. But how is this marvellous union accomplished?

The Holy Fathers employ two comparisons, which our Lord Himself made use of in instructing His servant. At the moment of communicating He said to her: "Wilt thou now see how I am in thee and thou art in Me?" In her humility she kept silence, but, at once, she saw our Lord as a transparent crystal, and her own soul as most pure and shining water flowing throughout the Body of Christ.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem says that those who communicate are so intimately united to Jesus Christ that they have with Him but one body and soul. This wonderful union is expressed again, but with more theological

exactitude. "Behold," said St. Mechtilde, "whilst assisting at Mass Thou art wholly in the hands of the priest and yet art wholly in me." Our Lord answered: "Is not thy soul in all the different parts of thy body? If thy soul, a simple creature, has this privilege, why should not I, the Creator of all things, be in all My creatures and everywhere?"

He then caused her to rest on His Heart and said to her: "Receive My divine Heart entirely." And Mechtilde felt the divinity dart through her like an impetuous torrent.

But what is of more importance than knowing how this union is effected is to understand the fruits it ought to produce in us, and the obligation under which we lie, with God's help, of showing them in our lives.

Mechtilde had another day received the Sacred Body of Jesus. After sweet colloquies with Him, it seemed to her that our Lord took her heart and placed it in His divine Heart, so that the two made only one. He then said: "It is in this manner that I wished the heart of man to be united to Me in its desires, so that all its movements might be regulated by My Heart, as two winds blowing together make only one draught.

"This being so, man ought to unite himself to Me in all his actions. If, for example, he wishes to eat or to sleep, he should say: 'Lord, in union with the love which caused Thee to make this food or this rest for me, I take this for Thy eternal praise and for the needs of my body.' In the same way when some work is commanded Him, he should say: 'Lord, in union with the love which made Thee work with Thy hands, and causes Thee still to work unceasingly in my soul, in union with the love which lays this task on me, I wish to acquit myself of it for Thy glory and for the interests of all, for Thou hast said: "Without Me thou canst do nothing." I pray of Thee to unite it to Thee and to perfect it as Thy works are perfect, that

it may be as a drop of water fallen into a great river, which has no other movement than that of the river."

"The union must also be one of will, so that all may be accepted as My will in adversity as in prosperity. As two precious metals melted become one and can no more be separated, so man by love becomes one mind with Me, and this is the greatest perfection and the highest sanctity in this life."

Printed in England

46489

244.53
M465

The Love of the Sacred Heart / St. Mechtilde

DATE	ISSUED TO
	3/81
MAR	Pat Benson GTU 12881

244.53
M465

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY
BERKELEY, CA 94709

46489